

Great Expectations: Provisional Modernism  
and the Reception of J.J.P. Oud

by

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture:  
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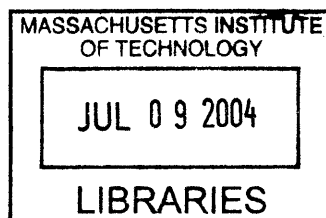
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on April 30, 2004 in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture: History and Theory of Architecture.

## Abstract

My dissertation analyzes the reception of the work of J.J.P. Oud (1890–1963), the modern Dutch architect, by examining the systems of dissemination and reception of modern European architecture from 1910 to 1953. Reception played an important role in Oud's career since he was internationally famous before World War II and practiced only as a provincial Dutch architect following the war. My study investigates three factors affecting his legacy: Oud's theoretical approach to architecture in his writings and projects—what I term his provisional modernism, its reception in the German and American modern movements before World War II, and its reception in the internationalized American modern movement and in the Dutch modern movement immediately following the war.

My study argues that to understand Oud's legacy, one must examine not only his work but also the prevailing expectations of those who received his work. Using the reception theory of the literary theorist Hans Jauss and his concept of a "horizon of expectation," my study contends that Oud was celebrated where the nexus of his work met prevailing expectations, but was maligned when it did not. Seen through this lens of projection and reception, seeming incongruities such as those between his national versus international reception and his pre versus postwar celebrity are the result of exchanges among those who receive his work, and their expectations of Oud's architecture, and his response within these different contexts.

Thesis Supervisor: Mark Jarzombek

Title: Associate Professor of History and Architecture



For

Frances Hill Fox

My grandmother, my supporter, my great friend

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Like my subject, J.J.P. Oud, who believed the process of modernism was as important as the product, I would like to acknowledge and thank all of those who have helped make this dissertation possible. I first became interested in art and architectural history through the inspirational teaching of three professors at Stanford University: Albert Elsen, Jody Maxmin, and Paul Turner. Professor Elsen had a passion for modern art, encouraged close observation, and demanded excellence in all aspects of scholarship. By having the uncommon fortune to return to Stanford each week over the past several years to research and write, I have continued to benefit from the guidance and support of Jody and Paul.

My interest specifically in modern housing, and thus Oud, began at Williams College where I received my Masters in the history of art. Seminars with Eugene Johnson and Eve Blau convinced me of the value of the closer examination of the cultural and critical forces surrounding modern housing. It was Eve Blau who recommended that I apply to MIT, and for that piece of advice, I will be eternally grateful.

As many people realize, having an interest in something like modern housing and having a dissertation topic are two very different matters. Unusually, my topic germinated from a lunch with Alexander Tzonis, a visiting professor during my second year at MIT. He suggested that Oud might offer an interesting dissertation subject and invited me to visit him the following summer in Delft. He and his Design Knowledge Systems (DKS) group at the Technical University of Delft offered essential guidance

and support for my research in the Netherlands. In particular, I would like to thank these individuals associated with DKS for their great hospitality and continued friendship: John Heintz, Asaf Friedman, Karina Moraes Zarzar, Philip Bay Joo-Hwa, and Janneke Arkesteijn.

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and other cities have offered me a place to stay and warm hospitality while I completed my research. These include: Tom and Christina Grace, Alexander and Alison Packard, Will and Elizabeth Porteous, Wah and Ed Renwick, and the Beischer family in Stuttgart. My friends and colleagues in History, Theory, and Criticism at MIT have also been wonderful sounding boards to share the difficulties and the triumphs of research and writing. My writing and the clarity of my ideas have greatly benefited from the editorial work of Irene Elmer. For her time and insights, I am particularly grateful.

My mother and father offered their constant love and wise counsel and continue to inspire me with their sense of curiosity and an appreciation for other cultures. My brother has also been a steady guide both with his humorous comments and his ability to help run the family business so that I was free to pursue my intellectual interests. My wife, Lily, joined me halfway through my PhD, but she has a better understanding of my thinking and how to help me express my ideas clearly than many people who have known me much longer. Her love and support have been essential to completing my dissertation and she has added perspective and much joy to the process.

Finally, my grandmother, Frances Hill Fox, passed away last year, but lives on in this document. Not only did she provide much of the financial support to pay tuition and buy essential items like a computer during my time as a graduate student, but also she gave me the gift of a love of travel and a joy for meeting new people. I hope I will be able to pass these values on to my new son, Zachary, and I will continue to let her love of living be reflected in my scholarship.

## Introduction

As ever when one thinks of another architect that does not fall under a simple definition, then one should refer to J.J.P. Oud. In his lectures, in his scarce writings and in his later buildings lives an incessant argument of the for and against, of the thesis and antithesis. Constantly he advocates for the present and against the present, against others and, in the first place, against himself. An extremely seldom-occurring case in history!<sup>1</sup>

Sigfried Giedion (1888–1968), the noted Swiss architectural historian and promoter of the modern movement, reflected on J.J.P. Oud's architectural career in an article celebrating Oud's sixtieth birthday.<sup>2</sup> Rather than focusing on the triumph of Oud's designs, Giedion noted Oud's ability to defy expectations—an ability that he attributed to Oud's particular modernist vision. My study focuses on the formation of Oud's modernism, how the reception of Oud's modernism created expectations for his architecture, how these expectations affected Oud's ability to design and promote his architecture, and how all of these factors ultimately determined his legacy.

My dissertation begins by examining Oud's essays and articles, which previous studies cast largely as supporting texts for his projects and completed buildings.<sup>3</sup> While Oud did write numerous descriptive essays about his buildings, he also wrote articles that were not related to specific works. Rather, these articles outlined architectural

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1. Sigfried Giedion, "Aan de alleenstaande J.J.P. Oud bij zijn zestigste verjaardag," *Forum* 6, No. 5/6 (1951): 116–20.

2. *Forum* (1946–1978) was the postwar title of the journal of the Architectura et Amicitia group, which was based in Amsterdam.

3. The most prominent examples of this tendency include: Gunther Stamm, *J.J.P. Oud. Bauten und Projekte 1906 bis 1963* (Mainz: F. Kupferberg, 1984); Hans Oud, *J.J.P. Oud, Architect 1890–1963. Feiten en herinneringen gerangschikt* (s'Gravenhage: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1984); Donald Langmead, "The Rise and Fall of a Hero," in *J.J.P. Oud and the International Style: A Bio-Bibliography*, ed. Donald Langmead (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 1–28.

concepts, framed his work historically, and at times contrasted his ideas with those of other national and international architects. In this study, I recommend a shift in the analysis of Oud's architecture—away from the analysis merely of his buildings and their justification, and towards the construction of Oud and his ideas. This approach does not ignore the relationship between building and design; rather, it contextualizes Oud's struggle to define himself within the processes of building and writing.

Unlike other leading modernists who produced concrete manifestos for modernism, Oud's strain of modernism was different. Rather than defining modernism based on specific forms or formulas, Oud viewed modernism as a process. In its theoretical application, modernism was a developing process, involving the ongoing exchange of ideas. In built form, modernism was a process that considered the various constituencies impacted by the construction of the building. Thus Oud's social housing appears to be true to the utopian ideals of formulaic modernism, while the Shell Building, where the company wanted a representation of its corporate image, appears to be an inexplicable departure. This aspect of Oud's architecture arose from a long tradition in Dutch architecture that placed a premium on pragmatic design.<sup>4</sup>

Oud's focus on process, which I term provisional modernism, refused to allow strict forms to dominate the design of a building; rather the forms informed the design process, but the building had to address the needs of the inhabitants as well. Oud

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4. Importantly, Oud did not go so far as to use pragmatism as the generative force for his designs. For information on the pragmatic tradition in Dutch architecture, see Auke van der Woud, *The Art of Building*, trans., Yvette Blankvoort and Bard Jansen (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), xi. For recent and comprehensive reading on pragmatism and architecture see Joan Ockman, ed., *The Pragmatist Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000). For more general readings on pragmatism see Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992); and Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997).



defines this provisional modernism more explicitly in his writings, in his associations with specific artists and architects, and in his designs.

The provisional nature of Oud's modernism, expressed in his writing and in their application, created a number of seeming contradictions among his works in a period that sought a definition for modernism grounded either in sociology or in style. Oud's process oriented provisional modernism did not fit neatly into either camp alone. Thus either group that claimed Oud as a proponent of their modernism ultimately felt betrayed and rejected him. Instead, Oud's consistency in calling for architectural responsiveness led to an inevitable variability in his designs. This variability obliged Oud to keep defending and defining his position, since his formative ideas ultimately gained definition through building.

### **The Anti-Monograph**

Although he recognizes the unusual character of Oud's modernism, Giedion's process of analysis mirrors the standard for scholars since the earliest studies of Oud's architecture. This process traces Oud's prewar rise and postwar fall, concentrating on Oud's projects and buildings and using his writing to support formal and biographical connections. It describes Oud's rise to prominence, from his beginnings as a modern housing architect under the influence of De Stijl and Frank Lloyd Wright to his prominence as a leader of the International Style with his taut forms and undecorated style. This steady progression through an investigation of modern form and function comes to an abrupt end with Oud's Shell Building (1938–1945), causing Giedion to ask

in his essay, “Is this building really by Oud?”<sup>5</sup> Giedion concludes that it is the failure of this building, which emphasized classical rather than modern elements, that leaves Oud, a prewar leader of international modernism, outside the postwar movement.

Giedion’s methodology has its foundations in the first monograph on Oud, which was written by Henry Russell Hitchcock (1903–1987). This methodology has shaped the reception of Oud’s architecture through its repeated application to the analysis of his work. Hitchcock’s monograph analyzed the stylistic progression of Oud’s architecture from the beginning of his career until the monograph was published, in 1931.<sup>6</sup> A series of black-and-white photos, generally devoid of people, accompanied the short text, which organized disparate early stylistic elements in Oud’s buildings into a streamlined story of the development of the signature characteristics of a modern master. In 1932, Hitchcock, with the help of Philip Johnson (1906– ), repeated most of this analysis in the section on Oud in the catalog that accompanied their International Style Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York.<sup>7</sup> This catalog was itself largely derived from Hitchcock’s earlier study, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*.<sup>8</sup> In the widely circulated book that followed the exhibition, *The International Style since 1922*, Hitchcock and Johnson thoroughly integrated Oud’s architecture in thematic sections with the work of three other leading modern architects: Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier.<sup>9</sup> From this point forward, the

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5. Giedion, 116.

6. Henry Russell Hitchcock, *J.J.P. Oud* (Paris: Zervos, 1931).

7. Henry Russell Hitchcock et al., *Modern Architects* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932).

8. Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (New York: Payson & Clarke, 1929).

9. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932).

expectations for Oud's architecture would be determined not only by analyzing his work, but also by comparing it with the work of these three modernists.

Hitchcock's early analyses of Oud's work remained the standard reading of Oud's architecture until 1984, when two studies were published that, rather than using new approaches, expanded the materials for analysis. Gunther Stamm's *J.J.P. Oud Bauten und Projekte 1906 bis 1963* built from the analyses that appear in Hitchcock's texts by applying formal and biographical analyses to additional unbuilt projects and postwar buildings.<sup>10</sup> Hans Oud's *J.J.P. Oud. Architect 1890–1963* reversed the process of beginning with Oud's built environment by tracing Oud's personal development and determining that his buildings were a result of his efforts to find a "poetic functionalism."<sup>11</sup> Neither of these studies deviated from the established monographic style, or from Hitchcock's reliance on formal analysis.

Three recent books, however, have challenged this adherence to the formal analysis of Oud's architecture. These books serve as the foundation for my study. The first book, Ed Taverne and Dolf Broekhuizen's *Het Shell-gebouw van J.J.P. Oud: ontwerp en receptie/J.J.P. Oud's Shell Building: design and reception*, combined an exhaustive analysis of the design process and construction of the Shell Building with the investigation of its reception in the postwar context.<sup>12</sup> By suggesting the dynamic relationship between Oud's prewar and postwar reception and by comparing the Dutch and international receptions of the building following World War II, this study offers

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10. Stamm, *J.J.P. Oud. Bauten und Projekte 1906 bis 1963*.

11. Hans Oud, *J.J.P. Oud. Architect 1890–1963. Feiten en herinneringen gerangschikt*.

12. Ed Taverne and Dolf Broekhuizen, *Het shell gebouw van J.J.P. Oud: ontwerp en receptie/J.J.P. Oud's Shell Building: Design and Reception* (Rotterdam: NAI, 1995).

useful concepts for my dissertation.<sup>13</sup> Reception, however, is not the main framework of *Het Shell-gebouw van J.J.P. Oud: ontwerp en receptie/J.J.P. Oud's Shell Building: design and reception*. Rather, the authors use the reception of the building as a means of assessing Oud's efforts to assert the validity of his design. Furthermore, by limiting the analysis of the Shell Building to the postwar period, this study addresses the importance of the building in relation to the opportunities that it afforded Oud to design other buildings later in his career, rather than establishing the origin of the critical expectations that it defied internationally.

Broekhuizen continued his exploration of Oud's postwar projects in a second book, *De Stijl toen / J.J.P. Oud nu*, which closely analyzes the planning and construction of eleven of Oud's postwar buildings and describes how these buildings contributed to Oud's efforts to reassert his international presence.<sup>14</sup> Again, this study focuses on the analysis of the buildings, although in his last chapter, which describes Oud's renewed association with De Stijl, the author analyzes Oud's claims to international importance.<sup>15</sup> Reception, however, and specifically the expectations for Oud's architecture, are used to complement, rather than to organize, the overall analysis of Oud's late career, making the process of reception a facet of an analysis that still uses predominantly traditional monographic methodology.

In 2001, a major retrospective exhibition on Oud's architecture was held at the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi) in Rotterdam. In conjunction with this exhibition, several architectural historians, including Taverne and Broekhuizen,

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13. "In the catalog [of the International Style Exhibition], Oud is presented as a virtual prophet: A problematic reputation, incidentally, which contributed largely to his 'fall' following the publication of the Shell Building." Ibid., 130.

14. Dolf Broekhuizen, *De Stijl toen / J.J.P. Oud nu* (Rotterdam: NAi Uitgevers, 2000).

15. Ibid., 279–302.

published a book that attempted to address all of Oud's work through a combination of thematic and chronological analysis.<sup>16</sup> This book, rich in illustrations and with an ample selection of original articles and essays by Oud, is an indispensable resource for any scholar interested in Oud or in European modernism between 1900 and 1960.

Although the introductory essay provides a catalyst for my research with its section on Oud's international network, correspondence, and publicity; the main text maintains the viewpoint, long established in Oud scholarship, that he charted a "self-willed course" through modernism.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the essays and articles that are included are generally seen by the authors as support for design choices that Oud made in his buildings; the authors rarely analyze the possible other roles that these writings play in relation to Oud's design process. Even though the authors are aware of how Oud is appreciated in the Netherlands and internationally, and despite their efforts to mix a thematic organization with a chronological framework, their multifaceted approach does not relinquish a monographic tone.

As in *Het Shell-gebouw van J.J.P. Oud: ontwerp en receptie*, the reception of Oud's architecture is discussed in terms of individual projects, but it is not one of the themes around which the book is organized. Still, its larger importance is tantalizingly suggested in certain passages. For example, when one of Oud's essays is described as having "received almost instantaneous international recognition," and when the authors suggest Oud's desire to begin "the promotion of J.J.P. Oud as a leading Dutch architect of modern housing," the text implies that something more than just the power of Oud's

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16. Ed Taverne, Cor Wagenaar, and Martien de Vletter et al., *J.J.P. Oud, Poetic Functionalist 1890–1963: The Complete Works* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001).

17. Ibid., 9, 31–34.

designs affected his legacy.<sup>18</sup> Statements like these, which focus on the unresolved role of the dissemination and reception of Oud's architecture, still require scholarship. By applying reception as a methodology rather than just as a response to ideas, my study examines how the reception of Oud's writing and designs formed expectations for his architecture and how the reception of his writing and his designs shaped his ability to control his career.

My study does not simply examine the different ways in which Oud's architecture was received. Rather, it investigates the processes that affected that reception within a given national context. Margret Kentgens-Craig's *The Bauhaus and America*, a study taking a similar approach, provides guidance for the types of materials that must be closely examined to understand a specific national reception. To support her thematic chapters—such as “The Dissemination of Bauhaus Ideas: Paths of Communication” and “The Image of the Bauhaus in America”—Kentgens-Craig analyzes the exhibitions, journal articles, and influential personal relationships in America that encouraged the spread of information about the Bauhaus.<sup>19</sup> In a more systematic way, John O'Brian has made these areas of research, along with several others, the organizational tools of his study of the reception of Henri Matisse in America.<sup>20</sup> His chapter headings such as “Journalists,” “Private Collectors,” “Museums,” and “Critics”—represent areas of

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18. Ibid., 165, 191. Closer in style to a catalogue raisonné than to a traditional monograph, the book announces its monographic intentions in the first two sentences of the preface: “J.J.P. Oud is probably one of the most controversial Dutch architects from the first half of the twentieth century. During his lifetime he aroused both admiration and irritation with the self-willed course he pursued, a course he not only charted for himself, but also for the so-called Modern Movement in architecture.” Ibid., 9. The title also gives a nod to a traditional monograph by adopting Hans Oud's term “poetic functionalism”—a term that he uses in his monograph *J.J.P. Oud. Architect 1890–1963*.

19. Margret Kentgens-Craig, *The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts 1919–1936* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

20. John O' Brian, *Ruthless Hedonism: The American Reception of Matisse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

investigation, which allow him to analyze how Matisse functioned within these multiple systems for establishing value.

Kentgens-Craig and O'Brian offer persuasive methods for investigating how ideas are received, and their scholarship complements the works of Beatriz Colomina and Mardges Bacon, which provide examples of methodologies that focus on presentation and reception. Although Colomina is known for her work *Privacy and Publicity*, it is in her two lesser-known essays in *Architecture Production*—a collection of symposium papers on architectural reproduction and dissemination—that she forms the critical perspectives for her larger work.<sup>21</sup> In her introductory essay to the collection, she argues, “architecture, as distinct from building, is an interpretive, critical act.”<sup>22</sup> Colomina argues to understand architecture it is necessary to study both forms of presentation and interpretation. As she states, the goal for the collected essays, including her “*L’Esprit Nouveau: Architecture and Publicité*, is to question “in what ways does criticism enter into the production processes?”<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, Bacon, in *Le Corbusier in America*, addresses the American reaction to Le Corbusier’s visit to America among discussions of his expectations before his trip and his own subsequent reaction.<sup>24</sup> Her study provides an excellent framework for my study in its final chapter where she not only offers a comparative analysis of the French and American reaction to Le Corbusier’s *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches* (1937)

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21. Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Architecture Production* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988); Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

22. Beatriz Colomina, “Introduction,” in *Architecture Production*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 7.

23. Ibid., 18; and Beatriz Colomina, “*L’Esprit Nouveau: Architecture and Publicité*,” in *Architecture Production*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 56–99.

24. Mardges Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America: Travels in the Land of the Timid* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

(When the Cathedrals Were White), but also provides a useful synthesis of the different perspectives in American modernism following Le Corbusier's lecture tour in 1935 until his return in 1946 to oversee the design of the United Nations Headquarters.<sup>25</sup> Oud, who was often compared to Le Corbusier, faced many of the same critical forces that Le Corbusier faced in America. Ultimately, my study seeks to merge the methods and methodologies used in these four studies by systematically analyzing the reception of Oud's architecture in several contexts, through the publications, exhibitions, and personal relationships that influenced the construction of, and the production of expectations for, that architecture.

### ***Reception Theory: Jauss and Architectural History***

The issue of reception has appeared in architectural history whenever historians have been influenced by literary theory, and by its debates about the notion of "authorship."<sup>26</sup> Unlike many leading literary theorists, however, architectural historians have had difficulty adopting a skeptical view of the power of the architect ("author"). This is because architecture has traditionally explored buildings through the life of its architects.<sup>27</sup> As Dana Arnold notes in her critique of monographic analysis in architectural history, "The biographical approach to writing architectural history is limited in chronological terms by the life of the architect, how the building corresponds to his or

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25. Ibid., 255–311; and Le Corbusier, *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches: Voyage aux pays des timides* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1937).

26. Dana Arnold provides a good brief summary of this subject as it relates to British architecture. See Dana Arnold, "The Authority of the Author," in *Rereading Architectural History*, ed. Dana Arnold (New York: Routledge, 2002), 35–50.

27. Some of the best-known examples are Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author" in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 50; and Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josue Harari (New York: Cornell University Press, 1979).



her architectural practice and whether it comes at the beginning, middle or end of the career in question. In this way, architecture is mapped against the personal development of the designer, which implies some kind of progress.”<sup>28</sup> Of course, she notes that this does not imply that the architect has no importance; but questioning the power of the architect calls into question a long tradition of architectural history, where “named-authored buildings are privileged over those whose architects remain unknown or in question.”<sup>29</sup> Essentially, the idea of how value is established in architectural history becomes the issue when a monographic approach is jettisoned for one that focuses on reception.

Due to these prejudices within the discipline, when the issue of reception has been applied, it has been applied in a conservative way. Many architectural publications that address the subject of reception do so mainly to contextualize a formal analysis, rather than investigating how these opinions were formed, and how they affected history’s understanding of the building.<sup>30</sup> This type of analysis has its background in art history, where “reception” is often synonymous with “context.”<sup>31</sup>

Recently, however, several studies have appeared that draw on literary theory and its examination of these processes of reception. These studies are an additional basis for my study. Again, Kentgens-Craig sets the parameters of the investigation by

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28. Arnold, 36.

29. Ibid., 37.

30. Two examples that deal with a modernist subject are Christian Grohn, *Die Bauhaus Idee: Entwurf, Weiterführung, Rezeption* (Berlin: Mann, 1991); and Christina Biundo et. al., *Bauhaus-Ideen 1919–1994* (Berlin: Reimer, 1994).

31. Several recent publications in art history still continue to equate reception with context. See, for example, Belinda Thomson, *Impressionism: Origins, Practice, Reception* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000); Walter Feilchenfeldt, *Vincent van Gogh & Paul Cassirer, Berlin: The Reception of Van Gogh in Germany from 1901 to 1914* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1988); and Kate Flint, ed., *Impressionists in England: The Critical Reception* (Boston: Routledge, 1984).

discussing the ideas that bind reception and the problems that arise by focusing on this issue:

The process of transfer of artistic, intellectual, and pedagogical concepts to another cultural context is at the same time a process of acculturation and transformation. Therefore, everything that is not codified in some formulaic expression is in danger of being perceived and disseminated in modified, if not distorted, form. This condition is inherent in the nature of processes of reception, which always involve a recipient whose individual predilections thus assume a decisive role in the course and result of the process. In the end, every different recipient will arrive at different conclusions, so that objective apprehension is not always possible. It is seldom that two people see the same thing in the same way. The fact that the preconditions and standards of judgment change in the course of time only complicates matters.<sup>32</sup>

Although Kentgens-Craig mentions “individual predilections” as but one source of complications in the processes of reception, my study will focus particularly on this source. And while Kentgens-Craig investigates a single context—America—my study will investigate how expectations develop in several different cultural contexts.

My specific concentration on the concept of “expectations” is influenced in three respects by the work of the literary reception theorist Hans Jauss. First, his discussions of both the hermeneutic and the poetic aspects of literature in such works as *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982), *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (1982), and *Question and Answer Forms of Dialogic Understanding* (1989) inform my analysis, since they focus on the relationships among aesthetics, reception, and canon

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32. Kentgens-Craig, xviii.

formation.<sup>33</sup> As one of the leaders of the Konstanz school, a group of German literary theorists originally based at the University of Konstanz who are concerned with the issue of reception, Jauss attempts to develop a theory that explains the socially formative nature of the text.<sup>34</sup> Using Gadamer's concept of a "fusion of horizons," in which a union takes place between past experiences embodied in the text and the interest of the present-day reader, Jauss compares the original reception of the text to its reception at different points in time up to the present.<sup>35</sup> He believes that by following this method, the critic counteracts his own tendency to believe that full comprehension of a text resides either in the author's intent for the text or in its original reception. In this way, the role of the historian and critic becomes one of mediation and interpretation of the difference between past and present perception of the text, and through this analysis, of maintaining direct contact with the text.

Second, even though Jauss deals with literature, his method of analysis offers particular insight into the case of Oud and modern architecture—a case that has been dominated by formal analyses. Jauss himself argues that reception theory must play a role in the visual arts in the preface to *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*:

Since then, aesthetics has been oriented toward the representational function of art, and the history of the arts has seen itself as the history of works and their authors. Of the

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33. Hans Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans., Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Hans Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans., Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); and Hans Jauss, *Question and Answer, Forms of Dialogic Understanding*, trans., Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

34. Hans Jauss (1921–1997) and Wolfgang Iser (1926–) are viewed as the founders of this school. These theorists' respective foundational philosophies are expressed in their provocative inaugural addresses: Hans Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory (1967)" in *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, Timothy Bahti, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981). and Wolfgang Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction (1971)" in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader*, K.M. Newton, ed. (London: Macmillan Education, 1988).

35. K.M. Newton, ed., *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 187.

functions of art in the world of everyday life, only the productive, rarely the receptive and hardly ever the communicative efficacy and achievement of aesthetic experience were examined.<sup>36</sup>

If, as Jauss argues, literary paradigms both create the techniques for interpretation and in this way choose the objects to be interpreted, it follows that the analysis of modern architecture must involve the study of the static production of the architectural body and the methods of reception beyond its production.<sup>37</sup> The “readers” of Oud’s work and that of other modern architects did not locate their explanations of these new buildings and their social and architectural implications merely in what had existed before them, but also in what they *had expected* to exist.

Third, and most important to my study, the concept of “expectation” for Jauss brings together the world of the critic and that of the text. The meaning of the text from its initial reading does not determine an understanding or misunderstanding of the text by subsequent readers. Rather, it becomes a case of whether the reader’s expectations for the text are met. In my case, the expectations are those of the architects, critics, and historians who interpret Oud’s architecture. Understanding the processes of reading that define the expectations of a reader, and his subsequent acceptance or rejection of a building (text), is the basis for the formation of a canon, for the establishment of an architect’s legacy.<sup>38</sup>

By focusing on how expectations shaped the reception of Oud’s architecture and his response to these convictions, my study reveals different readings of Oud’s work,

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36. Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, xxviii.

37. Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 4–21.

38. Michael Hays, “foreword,” to Jauss, *Question and Answer, Forms of Dialogic Understanding*, ix–x.

depending upon its context. For example, Oud's designs and writing are seen as socially instructive in Germany, but devoid of social meaning in America, where the formal qualities of his buildings were highlighted while his writings were ignored. Many readings also question the unstated progressive and generally uniform formal and biographical interpretation of an architect's work that has long been the foundation for canonical history. Applying reception theory, and specifically the concept of expectations, to Oud's work also helps to show how the meaning of the term "modernism," which is often understood as a stable concept, was transformed during the years 1918 to 1953 and how the prewar reception of his architecture affected the postwar expectations for Oud's designs and writings.

By applying Jauss's ideas to my dissertation, I join other scholars who apply Jauss's methodology to architectural history. Among several recent studies that employ Jauss's ideas, two in particular have guided my efforts to integrate the concept of expectations into architectural analysis. In a collection of papers delivered at a recent conference in France on the reception of architecture, Fabienne Chevallier's "The Reception, the Objectives, and the Methods of Architectural History" stands out, with its suggestions for the application of Jauss's theory to architectural history.<sup>39</sup> Chevallier asks how a building and its architect should be judged, how the theory of reception must take into account architectural historians' contributions to modern history, and to what extent the expectations in architectural history can be studied scientifically, and argues

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39. Richard Klein and Philippe Louguet, eds. *La réception de l'architecture* (Paris: Jean Michel Place, 2002). In "L'architecture et sa réception" (43–45), Gérard Monnier examines Jauss's theory through the tension generated between the aesthetic of reception and the reception of the building as an object of study. In another paper, "La réception en architecture comme la réception en littérature?" (33–41), Jean-François Roullin argues that Jauss's horizon of expectation is different for the common user than it is for the trained historian and attempts to develop a term to describe the receiver of architectural works.

that Jauss's theory is particularly appropriate to answer these questions. For Chevallier, Jauss's methodology calls into question the way in which architectural historians traditionally think:

In a special manner, Jauss's invitation [to study reception] leads to a relativization of the importance of doctrines in the field of architecture. Ultimately, it leads to the use of political, cultural, social, and technical history to throw light on the history of architecture.<sup>40</sup>

Jauss's philosophy of reception allows architectural historians not just to give new interpretations of architecture, but also to assess how the expectations of previous critics and historians affected the construction of our history.

Another paper that I have found helpful for constructing the methodology of my study is "La réception du Bauhaus dans la revue "L'Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui" by Aymone Nicolas. In this paper, the author investigates the dissemination and reception of the Bauhaus and its ideas in France. He calls on Jauss in his analysis of the way about which the expectations of the French may have limited the avenues for reception for Bauhaus ideas, due to the differences in avant-garde architecture between Germany and France.<sup>41</sup> The limited expectations of the French readers of *L'Architecture D'Aujourd'Hui* and other journals promoting modern German architecture made the reception, as much as the ideas, essential to their understanding.

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40. Fabienne Chevallier, "La réception, les objectifs, et les méthodes de l'histoire de l'architecture," in *La réception de l'architecture*, 51. "D'une manière spécifique, L'invitation de Jauss amène à relativiser le poids des doctrines dans le champ de l'architecture. Au final, elle amène à éclairer l'histoire de l'architecture par l'histoire politique, culturelle, sociale et technique."

41. Aymone Nicolas, "La Réception du Bauhaus dans la revue 'L'Architecture D'Aujourd'Hui'" in *Das Bauhaus und Frankreich: Le Bauhaus et La France*, eds. Isabelle Ewig, Thomas Gaehtgens, and Matthais Noell (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 382.

### ***Provisional Modernism and Its Reception***

In an effort to reveal the strengths and weaknesses associated with Oud's provisional modernism, chapter 1 of my study investigates Oud's development by tracing the relationships among his writing; his architecture; and the institutions, groups, and influential associations surrounding his production in Holland. Oud's early years included a variety of schools, mentors, artistic circles, and municipal employment and the results of these influences are recorded in his journal articles and building designs. Through my analysis, three of Oud's essays emerge as central to his theoretical development in conjunction with his architectural production. "Over de toekomstige bouwkunst en hare architectonische mogelijkheden" (The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities, 1921), "De ontwikkeling der moderne bouwkunst in Holland: verleden, heden, toekomst" (Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past, Present and Future, 1922), and "De invloed van Frank Lloyd Wright op de architectuur in Europa" (The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe, 1925) capture ideas expressed in wide range of shorter articles; reveal the development of Oud's provisional theory, and show how practical concerns constrain his theory and initiate Oud's interaction with international movements in modernism.<sup>42</sup>

In comparing these writings with Oud's architectural production of the time, I do not intend to further the formalist claims of past historians. Rather, I hope to achieve exactly the opposite effect, by revealing how Oud's claims for an unstable modernism that sought continual evolution clashed with his concrete architectural production. Even though modern buildings and writing worked in conjunction during this period, they

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42. Each of these articles is included in J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur* (Munich: A. Langen, 1926).

functioned differently, as the writing created the intellectual framework for the built forms.<sup>43</sup> With this thought in mind, I also investigate Oud's role as an editor for the short-lived avant-garde journal, *i10*, which advocated debate about the intersection between modern life and modern artistic production. Understanding how Oud gained prominence in Holland through the ideas expressed in his writing, through the application of these ideas in his housing, and through his shaping the modernist debate as a contributor to and editor of *i10* serves as the foundation for my examination of his contacts with the German and American prewar modernist moments, and of his problematic postwar international reception.

A sense of the provisional in Oud's writing creates the potential for a wide range of reception, as Kentgens-Craig notes in her work on the reception of the Bauhaus, when she observes, "Everything that is not codified in some formulaic expression is in danger of being perceived and disseminated in modified, if not distorted, form."<sup>44</sup> My study begins to address the range of reception of Oud's modernism outside of Holland in chapter 2. I examine how the expectations for his architecture developed in Germany of the 1920s, and how Oud responded to those expectations. Although Oud had shown an interest in German architecture before World War I, including a student visit to the office of the influential Theodor Fischer in 1911, he did not return to Germany until the 1920s, when the focus of German modernism had shifted to searching for a balance between social needs and rational production. By then, many German architects and

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43. Theo van Doesburg may express this concept most eloquently when he writes, "The truly modern—i.e., conscious—artist has a double vocation: in the first place, to produce the purely plastic work of art; in the second place, to prepare the public's mind for this purely plastic art." Theo van Doesburg, "Ter Inleiding," *De Stijl*, 1, no. 1, (1917): 1 reprinted in Hans Jaffe, *De Stijl* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 10.

44. Kentgens-Craig, xviii.



critics had begun to look to other countries for solutions to modern design problems that were still largely theoretical in Germany. The method that Oud had used to design his completed workers' housing in Rotterdam suggested a possible direction to achieve built form.

Through a web of lectures, critical articles, and support by leading individuals, Oud received opportunities to establish his ideas in Germany and to gain a relatively unique position of influence as an outsider participating in the debates surrounding modern architecture. Oud's prominence in the German debates can be gauged by his participation in two influential exhibitions: the Bauhaus Exhibition of 1923 and the Weissenhof Siedlung of 1927. By expanding my scope of investigation more broadly than previous studies have done, and in order to examine the events leading up to these exhibitions and the connections afforded by them, I argue that Oud developed a network of contacts that gave him critical approval, allowed him to present his ideas in a series of lectures, and helped him to influence the content of these exhibitions.

Because Oud rose to prominence as rapidly in America of the 1930s as in Germany of the 1920s; it is tempting to equate the processes for his reception with the processes for reception of the German modernist movement. But a close investigation of the systems for the dissemination and reception of Oud's architecture in America before World War II reveals that Oud's designs were understood differently in these two countries. I discuss these differences in chapter 3. Modern architecture had developed much more slowly in America than in Europe, due to the dominance of the Beaux-Arts in America. The American movement had three predominant outlooks: one, advancing the understanding of the stylistic principles seen in modern European buildings; the

second, attempting to develop an American based movement that was responsive to modern social conditions, and a third, advocating practical diagrammatic planning. In addition, critics and historians often played a greater role than architects in codifying modernism in America than they did in Europe.

Oud's approach to the American movement was conditioned by his positive reception in Holland—a reception that had been largely reinforced by a similarly positive reception in Germany. Although he was unprepared for the different systems of reception in America, Oud did not suffer any immediate consequences from these differences, first, because he did not participate in promotion of his architecture and second, because Philip Johnson was working hard to promote his work in America. Johnson, along with Alfred Barr (1902–1981) and Hitchcock, of the Museum of Modern Art, promoted Oud's architecture and its stylistic attributes with particular zeal through their International Style Exhibition of 1932, and through the accompanying catalog, and book.

These men relied on their art historical training at Harvard—a training that emphasized the formal analysis of art objects—to help them to develop the terms to describe what came to be known as the International Style. By choosing to emphasize one aspect of his German reception, that of style, they ensured that Oud would become known for his forms and buildings rather than for his theories. Johnson made several attempts to bring Oud to America to lecture and teach, but despite his best efforts, Oud never visited America to attach theoretical ideas to his forms and reveal the provisional nature of his modernism through this interaction. Thus, the American movement's

understanding of Oud's architecture stood linked to MoMA's definition of its formal characteristics and to MoMA's position of power in his absence.

In chapter 4, I analyze Oud's position in the immediate postwar debates surrounding modern architecture in Holland and in America, where numerous European architects had fled and had helped internationalize the debate. While Oud maintained contact with the gradually evolving Dutch discussions about modern architecture, a radical shift had occurred in America—a shift that would make it difficult for him to reestablish his position of influence. Oud's Dutch argument for an evolving modernism based on the reintroduction of appropriate ornament was rebuffed by an American discourse interested in codifying, rather than expanding the prewar terms. The debate surrounding the Shell Building arose from the clash between Oud's conception of modernism and the expectations of those promoting a stylistic analysis in America—a clash that he spent the rest of his career attempting to overcome.

Hoping to regain his prewar prominence, Oud returned to the activities in Holland that had established his prewar position and had attracted international attention: writing journal articles, participating in exhibitions, and helping to organize exhibitions. But during this period, his prominence in Holland did not improve his international position. Rather, it made him seem out of synch with the international debates on the future of modern architecture, most of which were centered in America. Oud, who successfully defined a position in the Netherlands between those who argued for purely functional architecture and those who supported a return to traditional forms, failed in his efforts to define this position internationally. His essays and articles made him look as if he were

defending himself, instead of leading the movement in new directions, as he had done before the war.

Oud also attempted to return to international prominence by participating in a series of exhibitions in the early 1950s. In 1951, he was personally involved in organizing two exhibitions that featured his work. These were a one-man show of his work in Rotterdam to celebrate his sixtieth birthday and a De Stijl exhibition in Amsterdam to coincide with the Third Congress of the International Society of Art Critics. Oud used the format of his own exhibition as a template for the De Stijl exhibition, but despite his efforts, both exhibitions made him look like a prewar phenomenon, rather than as someone whose architecture held interest for the current debates. In 1953, Oud continued his efforts to associate himself with prominent modernists through creating the display for a Frank Lloyd Wright traveling exhibition in Rotterdam. Attempting to equate his creative abilities with those of Wright, Oud wrote the main essay for the accompanying catalog, but he failed to gain any international recognition for his efforts. Unable to revive his international connections, Oud concentrated his efforts in Holland thereafter. He ended his career as a provincial Dutch modernist concentrating on the design of public buildings.

By avoiding the usual monographic approach to Oud's career and instead using a series of national receptions to construct my understanding of Oud, I have brought to light figures that have been overlooked until now. For example, although many studies have described Berlage's association with Oud, the affinities between their respective writings have not been closely examined. These affinities are shown in my study to have been an important influence on Oud's architectural development. Similarly, Oud's

presence at the Bauhaus Exhibition and the Weissenhof Siedlung has been noted by many scholars. No other study, however, has examined Oud's presence in these exhibits in the context of the individual contacts and invitations to lecture that had increased his visibility in the German movement even before the exhibits were held.

In addition, new evidence and a rereading of known documents supports a new interpretation of Oud's reliance on Philip Johnson to establish his American prewar persona and to aid him in his attempt to revive his international postwar position. By focusing on the expectations for Oud's architecture by the leaders of formal analysis, my study throws new light on Oud's attempts in the postwar period to argue for the continued vitality of his design process. In the postwar period, the difference between Oud's position of prominence in the Netherlands and his lack of authority on the international scene raises questions about the construction of the terms of postwar debates concerning international modernism—questions that have yet to be resolved.

## Chapter 1

### Constructing J.J.P. Oud's Provisional Modernism: Training, Writing, and Building in the Netherlands

In this chapter, I establish how Oud's modernism is provisional by investigating the relationships among Oud's writings and his architecture. The importance of writing and its relationship to Oud's designs is already evident during his early career in the Netherlands. This period can be understood in four phases: the influence of his education and of his mentor, Berlage (1903–1922); his collaborations with Van Doesburg (1916–1921); his role as a city architect for Rotterdam (1918–1933); and his position as an editor for *i10* (1927–1929). In each phase, Oud developed first his theory and then applied these ideas to built concepts. Although often overlapping in dates, each phase responded to unique conditions, institutions, and actors that held expectations for Oud's architecture. Whether these expectations were met or unmet determined Oud's reception, his influence, and his ability to further define his goals.

Advancing ideas through writing was an essential facet of Oud's design process. In 1926, Oud stated in the foreword of the first edition of his *Bauhausbücher* that compiled a number of his significant essays, "To speak obliges one to deal with it [modern conditions]: The word forces action!"<sup>1</sup> Constructing buildings alone could not transform the architectural landscape. Writing encouraged modern thinkers to continue to produce new ideas, rather than adhere to dogma.<sup>2</sup> Oud never deviated from the idea

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1. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur* (Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1976), foreword.

2. Even the form of Oud's writings often encouraged the pursuit of difficult and unresolved ideas. In the foreword of his *Bauhausbücher* edition of 1929, Oud stated that it was more the spirit produced by the words than the exact choice of words that was important. He put this conception to practice in the final essay of this edition, "What Direction for New Building: Art and Standard," in which a series of questions and unresolved statements reflects Oud's tendency to seek an expression of man's needs in his architecture rather than to propose a set solution.

that the true form of modern architecture lay not in the application of formal ideals, but rather in the search for an architecture that created designs to meet evolving human needs. Through my analysis of the development of Oud's theory, his writings, and his buildings, a provisional relationship with limits will emerge between his ideas and practice that served changing conditions—an instability that Oud saw as both challenging and particularly modern.

### ***Oud's Architectural Education: School, Mentors, and Writing***

Oud's early architectural education was a conglomeration of formal schooling, interactions with a number of mentors, and travel. During this period of educational flux, writing emerged as a stabilizing force, and it remained a stabilizing force throughout Oud's career. Writing allowed Oud to explore how a design could serve the fundamental requirements of a building yet also function as an artistic expression.<sup>3</sup> In a continual effort to clarify his thinking about the role of the architect, Oud turned to recording his thoughts about his early experiences in his writings, either directly or indirectly through the construction of a general philosophy of architecture. Through the process of writing, Oud reflected on his ideas and proposed new concepts about architecture, situating himself in the middle of a process of self-definition.

Oud's understanding of architecture developed through a series of short-term studies at several schools and through his relationships with senior architects

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3. Some examples of the range of Oud's early writings include: J.J.P. Oud, "Over bouwkunst," *Schuitmakers Purmerender Courant*, 18 January 1911, in which Oud discusses historical and modern styles and writes against revivalism; J.J.P. Oud, "Ons eigne bouwstijl," *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 33 (1913): 223–24, a letter in which Oud responds to a previous article; and J.J.P. Oud, "Stadsschoon," *Schuitmakers Purmerender Courant*, 8 June 1913, in which Oud responds to an extension plan for his hometown, Purmerend.

associated with these schools. Oud began his education in Amsterdam, first at the Quellnis School and then at the Rijksnormaalschool (State School for Art Education). The staff of the latter included such leaders of the modern movement in Holland as Berlage, K.P.C. de Bazel (1869–1923), W. Kromhout (1864–1940) and J.L.M. Lauweriks (1864–1932). Kromhout and Lauweriks emphasized critical thinking and writing since both were members of the editorial board of *Architectura*, the publication of Amsterdam's leading society of architects, *Architectura et Amicitia*.<sup>4</sup> Oud also witnessed the transformation in the built environment that these and other architects were making in Amsterdam as he traveled to the city each day from his home in Purmerend.<sup>5</sup>

Of these leading modern teachers, Oud became closest with Berlage, who encouraged him to seek educational opportunities outside of Amsterdam and to put his ideas in writing. Under Berlage's guidance, Oud went to Delft Technical College, a leading center of architectural thought and design; but, he left soon after he arrived, possibly because the rigorous curriculum conflicted with his own meandering acquisition of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Although he finished only one academic year in Delft, Oud published two articles in the student newspaper. The articles reveal his inclination, even in adverse circumstances, to express his opinion in writing—particularly his opinion that a building should be something more than just a response to structural requirements.<sup>7</sup>

Berlage also encouraged Oud to seek architectural ideas beyond the borders of the Netherlands, turning Oud's attention to the work of Theodor Fischer (1862–1938) in

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4. Van der Woud, 164.

5. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 16.

6. *Ibid.*, 57



Germany. Even though Berlage's own architecture was deeply influenced by French and English theory, he turned to Germany for its concepts in city planning. For Berlage, and subsequently for Oud, a building did not develop in isolation, but as part of the urban fabric. The Germans—and especially Fischer—were leaders in this line of thinking. Thus, under Berlage's influence Oud traveled to Munich to join Fischer in 1911.<sup>8</sup>

In 1912—the year in which Oud returned from his German travels—Berlage presented America as an architectural and city-planning alternative to Germany with a series of lectures in which he described his extensive travels in America.<sup>9</sup> Oud attended these lectures and a series of classes at Berlage's home that further explained Berlage's understanding of American architecture. Through these experiences, Oud developed an enthusiasm for the works of Louis Sullivan (1856–1924) and Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) that matched that of Berlage.<sup>10</sup> Oud eventually combined Berlage's views with those of Van Doesburg, whom he would meet in Leiden, in an article on Wright, which he published in 1918.<sup>11</sup> Situating his understanding of Wright between Van Doesburg's thoughts about cubism and Berlage's ideas about mass, Oud developed a distinct analysis of Wright's work. His article also addressed the significance of Wright's architecture in regards to European modernism, making himself the natural successor to Berlage for offering the greatest understanding of Wright's architecture to a Dutch audience.

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7. Ibid., 57. J.J.P. Oud, "Opwekking," *Studentenweekblad*, 10 March 1911, and J.J.P. Oud, "Arbeiderswoningen van J. Emmen," *Technisch Studententijdschrift*, 15 March 1911.

8. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 58. More about this trip is explained in chapter 2.

9. H.P. Berlage to J.J.P. Oud, 7 March 1912, Oud J-B, Oud Archive, Netherlands Architecture Institute, Rotterdam. From this point on abbreviated as "Oud Archive".

10. Leonard Eaton, *American Architecture Comes of Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 216.

In 1918, when Oud wrote the first of his articles on Wright, he had already designed a number of small projects in Purmerend, but nothing to match the developing ambitions expressed in his writings. Four years earlier, Willem Dudok (1884–1974), a Purmerend-based architect whose writings on reinforced concrete first captured Oud's attention, joined Oud to design a series of collaborative projects, and most significantly a workers' housing complex in Leiderdorp. Although the design was more heavily influenced by English Garden City concepts than modern ones, the complex of twenty-three dwellings of two types and an adjoining commercial space offered a challenge with respect to economic constraints that tested the efficiency of the two architects.<sup>12</sup> (Figure 1) More importantly, Oud tested ideas espoused in his writings and began to develop his fundamental concept that theory should have a practical application. Even though their collaboration soon ended, Dudok continued to correspond with Oud about the role of the architect in modern design. Both architects sought a balance between individual expression and regulated design—a balance that Oud later pursued in his work as a municipal architect for Rotterdam.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Challenge to the Provisional: Van Doesburg***

Oud's involvement with the De Stijl movement and his work with the municipal housing office of Rotterdam created a predictable conflict between the arts and functional design. De Stijl sought a plastic utopia formed by the merging of the arts, while Oud's role as city architect dealt with the everyday problems of housing a growing

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11. J.J.P. Oud, "Architectonische beschouwing bij bijlage VIII, woonhuis van Fred C. Robie door F.L.Wright," *De Stijl* 1, no. 4 (1918): 38–41.

12. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 96.

number of workers in Rotterdam. The conflict between these two divergent concerns led Oud to seek further autonomy for his philosophy from past ideas and those that threatened the primacy of architecture. During this period, Oud began to exert greater control over the structure of his theory and the publication of his ideas. This period also marks a further turning point in promoting himself since the combination of his writings and buildings gave him new influence in the Dutch modernist movement.

In order to understand the impact of this period, it is helpful to understand the genesis and growth of the conflict between Oud and the arts. In 1916, Oud and Van Doesburg founded the Leidsche Kunstvereniging (Leiden Art Association) De Sphinx—a collaboration between visual artists and architects investigating modern concepts. Under the influence of Berlage, Van Doesburg and Oud sought an exchange between the arts and architecture.<sup>14</sup> Although they were united in their efforts, Van Doesburg and Oud approached their goal in different ways, producing a tenuous union between the two that lasted for the next five years. Oud wanted the practical aspects of structure to take precedence over all other artistic expressions, including color. Van Doesburg, by way of contrast, believed that painting offered architecture a spiritual escape from its material roots and therefore took precedence over built form. The disbanding of De Sphinx after a single exhibition probably should have served as a warning that these differences were irreconcilable. Instead, the ideas that drove the formation of the group led to continued collaboration between Van Doesburg and Oud, and formed a foundation for the De Stijl movement.

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13. Herman van Bergeijk, *Willem Marinus Dudok: Architect-stedeboukundige 1884–1974* (Naarden: V+K Publishing, 1995), 24.

14. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 93.

Oud's first design collaboration with Van Doesburg in 1917 for a building also revealed this separation between building and art. In that year, Berlage recommended Oud for the design of the De Vonk Holiday Hostel (1917–1919), and Oud commissioned Van Doesburg for several additional exterior and interior decorations. (Figures 2 & 3) Van Doesburg added three colored-brick exterior accents to what was otherwise a traditional looking symmetrical brick building with a steeply pitched roof. In 1918, Van Doesburg created a design for the main hallway and stair that created patterns of black, white, and yellow tiles, giving the nondescript space a dynamic feel. Although Van Doesburg's interior decorations seemed to challenge the solidity of Oud's architecture, Oud did not object to the intervention.<sup>15</sup>

For Oud, the independent commission or the private project offered the perfect opportunity to investigate aesthetic questions. But when it came to municipal housing, Oud believed that the aesthetic must be balanced with other considerations, such as costs and utility—an idea that became a principle of his provisional modernism. Oud expressed this contrast in his article, "Bouwkunst en normalisatie bij den massabouw" (Architecture and Standardization in Mass Construction), written during the construction of De Vonk, "Where the building of private houses is concerned, he [the architect] can go on enjoying this privilege [of traditional design practice]; but in the case of mass construction the growth of industrial methods in our time demands that the criteria for the building of private dwellings be set aside. The problems of mass construction must be examined with an open mind . . ." <sup>16</sup> Although the De Vonk collaborations worked

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15. Ibid., 141–143.

16. J.J. P. Oud, "Bouwkunst en normalisatie bij den massabouw," *De Stijl* 1, 7 (1918): 77-79. Also see translation in Tim Benton, Charlotte Benton, and Dennis Sharp, *Architecture and Design 1890–1939* (New York: Waston-Guptill Publications, 1975): 117–18.

smoothly, this attitude resulted in future differences with Van Doesburg over the design of municipal housing in Rotterdam.

Even though *De Stijl* began publication in 1917, the De Stijl manifesto did not appear until 1918—the delay suggests how Oud and Van Doesburg’s union of divergent approaches challenged future collaborations.<sup>17</sup> In the first issue of *De Stijl*, Van Doesburg presented a much more provisional concept of the role for *De Stijl* than he would in the manifesto:

Since the public is not yet able to appreciate the beauty in the new plasticism, it is the task of the professional to awaken the layman’s sense of beauty. The truly modern—i.e., conscious—artist has a double vocation; in the first place to produce the purely plastic work of art, in the second place to prepare the public’s mind for this purely plastic art. To serve this end, a periodical of an intimate character has become necessary.

This introduction to the journal placed emphasis on Oud’s two points of interest, creating designs and writing about them. The suggestion of a “purely plastic art” became much more pronounced by 1918, and was reflected in the spirit of Van Doesburg’s manifesto for *De Stijl*: “There is an old and new consciousness of time. The old is connected with the individual. The new is connected with the universal.”<sup>18</sup> Tellingly, Oud’s signature did not appear on this document, which was more dogmatic in its tone if not its words. A responsiveness to practical constraints gave his modernism

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17. In a letter of 1978 to G. Fanelli, H.T. Wijeveld recounted how the publication date for the first issue of *De Stijl* may have come about. “I went to see Theo van Doesburg in Leiden with a proposal for him to join our group. . He said he would think about collaboration. The next day, I received a letter of refusal, which I still have. Later, it appears that he, after having written the letter, raced to a nearby printer and placed an order for his own publication. A few weeks later, the first number of *De Stijl* (October 1917) appeared.” Quoted in Martijn F. Le Coultre, “A Remarkable Magazine,” *Wendingen: A Journal for the Arts, 1918–1932* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 29.

its meaning rather than adherence to an abstract concept—a result of his architectural training that he would not relinquish.

Although Oud had collaborated with Van Doesburg on *De Vonk*, his ideas concerning city planning and social housing were still influenced by Berlage. He documented this allegiance in “Het monumentale stadsbeeld” (The Monumental Townscape), an article that appeared in the first issue of *De Stijl*. This article foreshadowed Oud’s progress towards his own distinct architecture by revealing his desire to integrate new materials with Berlage’s ideas about urban planning.<sup>19</sup> Oud acknowledged that his planning “follows the line set by the Berlage School,” and that it emphasized the connection between the building and the streetscape to create a “rhythmic play of plane and mass.”

Not only the sentiments, but also the language mirrored that of Berlage, as can be seen by comparing it with a passage from Berlage’s well known essay, “Architecture’s Place in Modern Aesthetics.” Berlage connects the creative mind and its material result through the symbolism of architecture:

If architecture really wants to become art, the character of the simple dwelling and the simple monument needs to be relinquished, and both need to be incorporated into a higher unity. Thus, in order to belong to the realm of the arts, the dwelling itself must be given a monumental meaning or symbolic character, in other words, it must become a dwelling for eternity on earth. In this way, the material form shows evidence of the concept that springs from the invisible and infinite realm of the mind. Matter is not the

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18. Theo van Doesburg, “De Stijl Manifesto,” *De Stijl* 2, no. 1 (1918): 2.

19. J.J.P. Oud, “Het monumentale stadsbeeld,” *De Stijl* 1, no. 1 (1917): 10. For a similar analysis, see Manfred Bock, “Essay on ‘de 8 en Opbouw,’” *De 8 en Opbouw 1932–1943* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 1989): 32.

servant of life arising from the mind, nor an expression of the spiritual energy that creates tangible forms; because of its absence within space, it can work only negatively in suggesting the realm of the mind—in other words, it is purely symbolic.<sup>20</sup>

Oud's text mirrored Berlage's in its emphasis on spatial planning, if not its syntax, but an important distinction appeared between Berlage's symbolic significance for architecture and Oud's focus on its plastic qualities:

Only the universal is important in attaining a style. A monumental style will emerge through a collaboration of artistic expressions operating within a purity of means, because collaboration is only possible when each art form operates within its own domain and eschews all impure elements. The defining feature of each art form comes to the fore in such a situation and the need for collaboration naturally makes itself felt. The defining feature of Architecture is Plasticity. Architecture is a plastic art: the art of spatial determination, and as such it expresses what is most universal in the townscape: in the single building and in the joining together and juxtaposition of buildings.<sup>21</sup>

The plastic embodied the provisional for Oud. Rather than producing “a dwelling for eternity on earth,” Oud determined that a responsiveness was as important for modern design as its aesthetic ideal. At the same time, Oud signaled how his own architecture might evolve by embracing new building techniques and materials in an effort to connect inhabitants to the modern city. The housing block represented the beginning of

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20. H.P. Berlage, “Architecture's Place in Modern Aesthetics” (1886), reprinted in Hendrik Petrus Berlage, *Thoughts on Style 1886–1909* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Institute, 1996), 100.

21. J.J.P. Oud, “Het monumentale stadsbeeld,” *De Stijl*, 10–11.. Translation from Han Jaffe, *De Stijl* (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1971), 96.

the movement to reform city architecture by using its material requirements to produce new forms:

The beauty characteristic of the modern building block will be expressed in a strong emphatic rhythm and in the acceptance of modern materials. A prominent feature will be a radical break with the pitched roof, resulting in the acceptance of the flat roof and all that it implies: the solution of horizontal spans by means of constructions in iron and concrete, the treatment of wall surfaces and wall openings with modern materials. In this way, the architecture of the building block will determine to a large degree the character of the modern aesthetic in architecture.<sup>22</sup>

Rather than abandon Berlage's balance of distinctive elements, Oud, through a growing familiarity with modern materials, transformed a search for the eternal into a response to the practical.

### ***Rotterdam Municipal Architect: Ideas in Practice***

In 1918, the last year of the First World War, the city of Rotterdam hired Oud as a municipal architect. The city was faced with a severe housing shortage, caused both by the war and by a fifty percent increase in its population between 1900 and 1915. In response to this shortage, Oud immediately began to produce designs for low-cost housing.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Oud faced bureaucratic battles in regard to funding for his projects, which often obliged him to simplify his designs or to stop projects from ever being built.

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22. J.J.P. Oud, "Het monumentale stadsbeeld," 10.

23. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 192.



Even as he confronted the practical realities of his position, Oud attempted to integrate into his work the theories on standardization and town planning that he described in *De Stijl*. The introduction of these ideas occurred slowly, unfolding from an interior to an exterior expression over a number of projects. Although many previous studies focus on the application of Oud's De Stijl-influenced ideas, and on his collaboration with Van Doesburg during this period, few other studies focus on Oud's efforts to develop Berlagian town planning ideals that placed a premium on designing for necessity with modern materials and standardization.<sup>24</sup> Oud developed these ideals first in his writings and then in his designs for several workers' housing projects.

In his first project, which he undertook soon after beginning work in January of 1918, Oud illustrated the idea of connecting the streetscape to the architecture of the individual building with the rhythmic placement of architectural elements in two blocks of dwellings in the Spangen district (blocks I and V, 1918–1920). (Figure 4) These two blocks of dwellings joined a complex of already completed brick buildings. Oud connected the exterior of the buildings to the surrounding streets with an emphasis on several horizontal courses of darker colored bricks that provided a visual link with the street and contrasted with the vertical grouping of windows. Adopting a generally conservative exterior design due to the existing structures, Oud allowed his collaborator, Van Doesburg, to introduce color only at the window frames.

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24. It must be noted that the standardization that Berlage advocated was on the local level. In 1918, at the yearly convention of the National Housing Council, national standardization of housing plans was proposed. This proposal received strong resistance from architects and housing society officials since they felt that local and regional flexibility and building customs were threatened by a national plan. For more information see, Nancy Stieber, *Housing Design and Society in Amsterdam: Reconfiguring Urban Order and Identity, 1900–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 149–154. Van der Woud, 192.

Once free of the need to contextualize on the exterior, Van Doesburg produced more radical interior color schemes. Blue and yellow accented patterns of black and gray that destabilized the rectilinearity of the basic architecture. But when Oud realized that the occupants usually covered these murals with wallpaper, he was less willing to accept these radical designs in future projects. In contrast, Van Doesburg viewed the radical interior color schemes as another aesthetic experiment on a slightly larger scale than a private residence on which he had also collaborated, and even encouraged Oud to publish the entire project in *De Stijl*.<sup>25</sup>

Although he tried to accommodate Van Doesburg's aesthetic goals, Oud based his design process on a careful consideration of the structural elements of the building, and the social demands of the inhabitants. Oud's work on blocks VIII and IX for the Spangen complex (1919–1920) revealed his desire for a coherent relationship between the dwelling and the surrounding public space.<sup>26</sup> (Figure 5) Oud described his ambitions in the second of three articles that he published in 1919 on standardization in architecture. In this article, Oud combined the appeal for a standardized architecture that he made in the first article with the practical application of its concepts. Calling for economical and rapid construction, Oud argued that it required the following conditions:

Carefully worked-out plan form, in the sense that maximum requirements are contained in minimum spaces; systematized construction as the result of economically efficient placement of structural walls (which affects the plan form in the first instance); economic production of standard materials; hardheaded management. Means and objective determine one another in architecture: acceptance of this key concept should lead to new

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25. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 117.

methods and materials and accordingly, in pure representation, to new aesthetic design.<sup>27</sup>

Oud established a relationship between interior and exterior in these buildings where several types of design fit into a building that faced both the street and an interior courtyard. The buildings became progressively more intimate as one moved from the streetscape of flat, square facades into the enclosed courtyards of the blocks and eventually into the individual units. Designing against the “industry” of the city, Oud concentrated on the social aspects of the inhabitants as the template for constructive choices.

Van Doesburg was not very sympathetic to Oud’s turn inward, since he felt that the aesthetic, rather than the practical, determined the form. Van Doesburg offered a color scheme for blocks VIII and IX that was similar to the one he had used in blocks I and V. He emphasized the outline of the windows with a dissonant triad of blue, yellow, and green tiles set against the red brick (which he had previously suggested should be plastered and painted white), to create a rhythmically dynamic façade.<sup>28</sup> Van Doesburg suggested a similar range of colors for the interior, which Oud immediately questioned—pointing out that yellow was impractical for areas that might have heavy use.

A combination of municipal objections that Van Doesburg’s design might overshadow a nearby private housing effort and Oud’s refusal to relinquish his

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26. Ibid., 227.

27. J.J.P. Oud, “Massenbouw en Straatarchitectuur,” *De Stijl* 2, no. 7 (1919): 80. Also see translation in Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 209.

28. Hans Esser, “J.J.P. Oud,” in Carel Blotkamp et al., *De Stijl: The Formative Years, 1917–22* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 144.

dedication to the Berlagian tenets of proportional and methodical rhythm, created a conflict between Oud's and Van Doesburg's design philosophies. An exchange of letters between Oud and Van Doesburg ensued, ending with the often quoted letter by Van Doesburg: "Given the fact that I am no housepainter but take these things seriously; given the fact that I am Van Doesburg, *I have, I seize* the right to cry: *NO—NO—NO!* Either this way—or nothing."<sup>29</sup> Although this has often been described as the final conflict in the growing tension between Oud and Van Doesburg (even though they continued to correspond), its effect on Oud has not been fully investigated. But as I will argue—and as his subsequent work suggests—Oud seemed to realize following this collaboration that to develop his own modern language, he needed to choose future housing projects that left him greater autonomy in the choice of materials and design, and to do this, he needed to have his theory prevail among people of influence.

### ***The Future of Modern Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities (1921)***

Oud entered the 1920s in conflict with Van Doesburg. During this time, he was also attempting to balance his theoretical ideas with the constraints of municipal architecture. At moments of stress in Oud's career, such as during his education in Delft, he turned to writing to marshal his thinking into action. He did so now. "The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities" emerged from the practical application of architecture called for in his position as municipal architect—a position that challenged both his De Stijl inclinations and his Berlagian fundamentals. Unlike his

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29. Theo van Doesburg to J.J.P. Oud, 3 November 1921, inv. No. 1972-A.564, Fondation Custodia, Institut Néelandsais, Paris; quoted in *The De Stijl Environment*, Nancy Troy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,

early writings, which simply explicated his designs or analyzed texts or buildings, this essay, like his recent *De Stijl* essays, combined proclamation with explication.

The essay deserves close investigation both for its early date and for offering the first description of the principles that would guide his provisional modernism. It was first published in 1921 before Le Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture (Towards a New Architecture, 1923)*, and before Walter Gropius's *Internationale Architektur (International Architecture, 1925)*.<sup>30</sup> In this essay, Oud created the template for future radical thought—a fact recognized by avant-garde circles inside and outside of Holland—which quickly turned the essay into the first modern architectural “best seller.”<sup>31</sup> This international popularity, in turn, gave Oud greater freedom with the municipal bureaucracy to apply to varying degrees the ideas expressed in the essay to his subsequent housing projects.<sup>32</sup>

In an effort to construct a provisional modern architectural philosophy, Oud used traditional architecture, as he had used Berlage's ideas, as a springboard rather than as a foil for his efforts. Instead of separating the modern movement from this traditional development of architecture, Oud mined it for its useful characteristics and for instances where he observed a connection between the human spirit and its outward manifestation in form. Although the traditional aspect of architecture had prevented the discipline from developing a new “life rhythm” and a new “aesthetic energy,”<sup>33</sup> Oud

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1983), 86.

30. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (London: J. Rodker, 1931) and Walter Gropius, *Internationale Architektur* (Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1981).

31. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 191.

32. *Ibid.*, 265, 274.

33. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 65.

argued that the architect could capture the physical expression of these sentiments by breaking through a confusion between cause and effect that had occurred over time:

Renaissance built from Gothic, Gothic from Romanesque, Romanesque from Byzantine, and the essence of architecture: namely, the equal importance of support and load, of tension and force, of action and reaction, was never purely represented in the course of time, but always hidden from the eye, was always exquisitely veiled.<sup>34</sup>

Embellishment—giving the beautiful precedence over the technical—masked the structural “effect” over time. Oud specifically inveighed against adherence to a “form” tradition. Rather, he desired that form adhere to the “spirit”—in this case, to the technical manifestations of this spirit. Architecture offered the possibility of a reconciliation between time and space in its balance of spiritual and practical concerns by linking the temporal and spatial in built form.

At the same time, Oud acknowledged that, because buildings needed to serve human needs, architecture could not be based on spirit alone. Oud argued that architecture did not have the freedom of art:

Architecture is not, like the pure arts, exclusively the result of a spiritual process; it is also influenced by material factors. Its aim is double in being both useful and beautiful at the same time, and as the material circumstances change in the course of time, so architecture itself changes as well as adopts new styles.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Ibid., 65.

35. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 185

Structural materials in combination with color created new relationships between volumes of space and mass. Modern materials, such as reinforced concrete, allowed the wall to circumscribe the space while the volume of space defined its function.<sup>36</sup> In the same way, color, Oud implied, could merge with these structural innovations and enhance their effects by accenting outlines and certain features of the structure.

With a desire for a new style resulting from the merging of new materials with modern social demands, Oud turned to the process of the machine with its “austerity and strictness of design,” making the technological the driver of architecture’s advancement rather than a hindrance. In advocating the combination of technology, material, and color, Oud believed that an uninspiring functionalist purism could be avoided—producing an artistic application of these new means of construction.<sup>37</sup> The process of combining these three key elements provided a goal for modern architecture, rather than a formula:

Concluding, a rational architecture founded on the actual conditions of life, is in every respect a contradiction to the current architecture . . . Without falling into any arid rationalism, architecture will be above all practical, and determined by the higher goal at which it aims.<sup>38</sup>

Although modern architecture needed to respond to the requirements of the inhabitant, it still aimed at a higher aesthetic goal. This striving towards a theoretical ideal while still being responsive forced Oud to consider each project individually, but at the same time limited his aesthetic choices to those forms closest to his ideals.

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36. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 73.

In this way, Oud focused on materials like reinforced concrete and the application of color to develop a responsive architecture that balanced flexibility and form. Not only did reinforced concrete reduce the actual mass of the wall needed to support the building, but it also reduced the wall's perceptual mass. Oud most clearly described the visual understanding of reinforced concrete when he compared it to traditional brick and mortar construction. Whereas the great number and small size of the bricks and mortar joints denied the wall a single expression, reinforced concrete offered "a homogenous compilation of the supporting and weight-bearing parts, as well as the possibility of a horizontal extension of the important perception of the pure wall and mass borders."<sup>39</sup> The limitations of traditional materials and building techniques could be abandoned for a single material with greater flexibility to respond to building conditions.

Likewise in advocating the application of color to architecture, Oud highlighted the new freedom in design that materials like reinforced concrete provided. He believed that color could either merge with the now-emphasized volume or, through the shrewd application of color on certain parts of a building, could highlight the planar qualities of the new materials. In Holland, Oud had seen color applied mainly in tiles and bricks on the exterior of buildings—and these had been rather drab colors.<sup>40</sup> As Oud observed in a later article, modern architecture offered a complete contrast to the traditional use of materials:

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37. Ibid., 73.

38. Ibid., 75.

39. Ibid., 73.

40. Ibid., 74–5.



New architecture is in accord with life. It takes delight in all the necessities of human existence . . . It is simple and direct, clear and simple, bright and colored. It lies not in the shadows of mysterious sentiment, but rather it radiates in the fullness of daylight.<sup>41</sup>

Just as the single expression of the wall captured the technical construction of the wall, so color could emphasize the “lightness” of the wall by making it appear as a single plane, placing emphasis on the volume, rather than on the mass of the form.<sup>42</sup> Color also responded to the give-and-take that existed between new architecture and its inhabitants where the architecture reflected the social needs in its forms, and in doing so, inspired recognition of the contemporary condition by its inhabitants.

By arguing that architecture needed to possess both the spirit of abstraction and respect for materials, Oud was arguing that these two goals could be resolved in the regulated technical form. Oud demonstrated an inclination towards the products of new technology such as men’s suits, automobiles and electric machines by using images of these products to illustrate his article. Oud argued that the beauty of these objects resulted from their “total design.” Hence, the purest manifestation of the technical within architecture would be in the responsive total form—as it was with the auto, where each part became so interrelated with every other part that the removal of the smallest piece would jeopardize the order and usefulness of the whole.<sup>43</sup>

Oud had first presented this argument in *De Stijl*, in an article entitled “Kunst en Machine” (Art and Machine, 1917). In this article, Oud drew parallels between the ability

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41. J.J.P. Oud, “Antwort auf die Umfrage,” *Kultdienst*, Sept. 16 (1930). Compare this quotation to the following one from “The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities”: “The choice of wall materials is already now crucial. It is necessary that the painterly aspects of the wall materials tend towards the pictorial, that is to say, the shading, the mood, then directed with it the color feeling of the total structure to nuance and effect.” J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 74.

42. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 75.

of a balanced design to allow the expression of individual parts in the same way in which groups, associations, and confederations organize in larger society to allow individuals to strengthen their means of expression.<sup>44</sup> The key to architecture, and therefore the goal in society, did not lie so much in the absolute refinement of form as in the balance established between parts of the total form and their response to building conditions.<sup>45</sup>

Unifying the building in a constructive whole became the goal of Oud's polemic—a goal made easier to achieve by removing ornament and revealing the clarity of function. Combining parts of the entire structure in a way that revealed their interrelatedness—an interrelatedness that constituted the beauty of the structure—rather than an adherence to a set of principles in the future:

An architecture, which already experiences beauty in its constructive functions, that is to say, which is able through its inner tension to elevate the construction itself out of its material necessity into an aesthetic form.<sup>46</sup>

By balancing aesthetic form and social need in his provisional modernism, Oud's architecture expressed the tension of the constructive relationship among the parts—a series of relationships that developed within the limits of the social parameters governing each design.

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43. Ibid., 68.

44. J.J.P. Oud, "Kunst en Machine, *De Stijl* 1, no. 3 (1918): 25–27.

45. For Oud, the notion of a "total form" takes on various meanings. Often it refers to the concept of the universal, though at other times it speaks to an extension of the technical aspects of the building beyond the actual structure. For example, the rhythm of the massing of a building not only gives it a unified expression, but also connects this building to others in the city. Oud expressed this connection between art and the machine most fervently in "Kunst en Machine." Oud, "Kunst en Machine," 25–27.

46. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 70.

### ***Thought in Process: Modern Housing for Rotterdam***

By 1921, Oud's architectural philosophy had emerged from the overriding influence of Berlage and Van Doesburg. Oud applied his own theories to projects that, instead of merging with the urban fabric, like his Spangen works, stood out as distinctive sections of the city. His investigation of the relationship of the individual to the immediate and larger urban community—an investigation that had begun in his large urban housing blocks—fully evolved in his low-rise housing schemes for Oud-Mathenesse (1922–1924), Hoek van Holland (1924–1927), and Kiefhoek (1925–1930). Isolated from the monotony of the large city avenues, these projects used street placement, open space, and architectural cues to organize the living environment. Although Oud-Mathenesse and Kiefhoek, in particular, still displayed some elements of Berlagian design, such as concentric rows of housing organized around squares, the flesh of the project—the combined materials—was new, and it was Oud.<sup>47</sup> The semi-isolation of the projects allowed Oud to use more radical design elements and materials than he had in the past, since these projects responded to their immediate context more than the larger urban context. As in Oud's writings, Berlage formed the link between present concerns and the past—the larger city—but new demands for community within the larger city required that Oud create a new architectural language—a language that was turned inward, self-reflective, and provisional.

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47. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 250

In May of 1922, Oud began to design the Oud-Mathenesse Municipal Housing (known as the “Witte Dorp” or White Village).<sup>48</sup> (Figure 6) This project consisted of 343 units of single-family housing and several commercial spaces. Because it was located on the edge of the city, Oud faced few of the contextual constraints on design that he had faced with his housing blocks within the urban fabric. Instead, he created a neighborhood with a village like feel that eschewed traditional design elements other than pitched roofs. With its geometrical street layout, and its short street axes meeting in a central square, the plan resembled Oud’s courtyard-planned urban blocks without the need for contextualization in the larger city.<sup>49</sup> The cohesiveness of the project was broken only by his application of primary colors, including the red tile roofs, the blue doors, and the yellow gutters. These distinctive accents had been foreshadowed in his conflict with Van Doesburg and “The Future of Architecture and its Architectonic Possibilities,” but he strategically applied them for the first time in this project. The theoretical and the practical met in these architectural accents that visually increased the sense of cohesiveness in the project.

Oud continued the balance between shared public and distinct private space in the two subsequent housing projects that he constructed for the housing authority before the war. Although he intended his Hoek van Holland Housing to be a series of three buildings linked by a series of spaces, financial constraints limited him to a single strip of forty-one dwellings, four shops, four warehouses, and a centrally placed

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48. The largest study on this project is Bernard Colenbrander, ed. *Oud-Mathenesse, Het Witte Dorp 1923–1987* (Rotterdam: NAI, 1987). For additional smaller articles see Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 250 and Langmead, 165, 173.

49. *Ibid.*, 250.

passageway.<sup>50</sup> (Figures 7 & 8) Despite the small size of the project, he united the individual units into a single block with a sweeping cornice wrapped around the shops at either end of each building, following the flat rhythm of the roofline. Oud revealed the intersection of theory and form:

The horizontality of the building, with its long, unbroken lines, with its openwork fencing and its broad windows, alludes to the need for vastness and boundlessness (the advantages of the countryside): the tautness and smoothness of the exterior, the perfectionism of the details—simplicity in particular demands the greatest care—bespeak the refinement that distinguishes the city from the village. The light, bleached colour takes its cue from the dune landscape, while the front gardens, in their somewhat rigid demarcation, represent the less welcoming aspect of the city.<sup>51</sup>

Since Oud did not adhere to a formula, but practiced a provisional modernism, the forms and use of materials differed from the Witte Dorp since the needs of the inhabitants was also different. In its forms and materials the buildings signaled to the inhabitants a means for negotiating the space between the city and the countryside.

Oud realized his concepts for a larger Hoek van Holland complex in his design for the Kiefhoek Workers' Housing. (Figures 9 & 10) This complex of almost 300 units, two shops, and two warehouses consisted of a conglomeration of housing blocks framing small streets that cut through the complex.<sup>52</sup> The rear of these blocks formed contiguous divided garden areas. Two squares balanced the opposite ends of the

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50. Ibid., 262. For additional Hoek van Holland references see Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 267.

51. Translated in Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 263. From J.J.P. Oud, "Woningbouw te Hoek van Holland," in *Het Groen-Wit-Groene Boek*, I.M. Dugteren and H. Dekking, eds. (Rotterdam, 1927), 38–41.

52. The most comprehensive study on the Kiefhoek is Sjoerd Cusveller, ed., *De Kiefhoek: een Woonlijk in Rotterdam* (Naarden: 1990). Also see Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 280 and Langmead, 171, 175.

project and served as points of decompression where the unity of the buildings and the streetscapes could be comprehended. The project, however, internalized the relationship between the building and the street independent of the existing multistory projects surrounding the site.

The design revealed a new confidence in Oud's handling of the structural vocabulary and of its ability to create an autonomous atmosphere within the larger city. In fact, compared to the Witte Dorp housing, his buildings became more block like in appearance due to their flat roofs and largely planar facades, he used color to distinguish individual houses in addition to rounded balconies and vertical elements that signaled the beginnings and ends of buildings. While the colors united the project in their repetition, these architectural elements offered visual relief, like punctuation marks in a run-on sentence. A fusion of theory and practice occurred in the vocabulary of elements in this project to the extent not seen before in the work of Oud. Realizing that this achievement resulted from the balance of aesthetic choice and social function that formed the provisional nature of his modernism, Oud again turned to writing to challenge the viability of his forms.

### ***The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past, Present, and Future (1922—1923)***

The growing comfort with modern design seen in Oud's housing complexes revealed itself in his writings. Working as a city architect and having gained some recognition for his writings, Oud reflected on his position and expressed a new independence in his thinking. Just before the construction of his Hoek van Holland Housing Complex, Oud began to write a lecture—"The Development of Modern

Architecture in Holland: Its Past, Present and Future”—that, despite its historical structure, reinforced the message of his previous “The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities.” In fact, in many ways the message of this essay could be seen as more persuasive than the systematic recommendation of his prior essay to adopt new materials, forms, and technology—since the force of history seemed to sweep all the previous efforts in Holland towards their logical conclusion: a rational modernism with Oud as its leader.

Oud recognized the benefits of writing a concise history of Dutch architecture in 1919, while he was working on an article that examined Berlage’s work in a historical context.<sup>53</sup> In his article on Berlage, Oud explained concisely how Berlage’s work was different from the work of his predecessors. But the greatest value of this article lay in its intended audience, local and foreign. Not only did Oud realize Berlage’s desire to reach beyond the Dutch borders (for Berlage worked intimately with Oud on the text), but also in writing this article, Oud became an authority on the development of Dutch architecture within and outside of Holland.<sup>54</sup> The validity of Oud’s own historical account benefited from the authenticity he had attained by having written an article about Berlage’s work. Oud strengthened his calls for a provisional modernism by recording historical instances a balance of aesthetic choice and responsive design.

Oud’s historical account of Dutch modernism also stands as another example in his career when he led the development of a format that other modernists would follow: that of the architect, rather than the critic, as historian. The tone of “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland” distinguished Oud’s from other modern European

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53. J.J.P. Oud, “Dr. H.P. Berlage und sein Werk,” *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*, 22 (1919): 6–8.

architectural theorists by combining a historical approach with a progressive vision. In contrast to Le Corbusier, who would offer historical models to illustrate his list of modern principles, and Walter Gropius, who would discount even the need to study history in the curriculum of the Bauhaus, Oud centered his argument on the historically evolved tension between the individual and the collective. Oud noted that the desire for an architectural revolution entailed a paradox: architecture called for building, while revolution required the destruction of existing principles.<sup>55</sup> “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland” centered on a single question: the question of how to resolve this paradox. Shrewdly, Oud argued for a revolution through evolution.

To overcome the need to eliminate historical forms, Oud created a historical narrative that resulted in the modern need to connect the building and spirit in an artistic expression. This made the architecture he advocated appear to be the product of an inevitable and natural development, as he had advocated in “The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities.” Placing his essay within a historical framework, Oud searched for the origins of modern architecture in Holland, while at the same time, he argued for the continued search for future functional forms. In this way, the tension of individual expression within community design that Oud first detected in the work of P.J.H. Cuypers (1827–1921) became the driving force behind the architecture that Oud advocated.<sup>56</sup>

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54. A series of letters between Oud and Berlage pertaining to the writing of this article can be found in File 1, 2, 3, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

55. Also see letter from F. T. Marinetti to J.J.P. Oud, 22 February 1924, File 15, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

56. It is interesting to conjecture how Oud’s personal experience with Cuypers and Berlage may have affected his historical presentation of each architect. Oud worked for two years in Cuypers’ office, but he was very young at the time and probably not as interested in the theoretical aspects of architecture as in learning basic practical skills. As he later wrote in his text to Lawrence Graf, “I was + or – 2 years at C. and S [Cuypers and Stugt]. In the long run I did not feel satisfied with the way in which my life was developing itself. I had tried to complete my education. . . but the lack of a good theoretical base was



Even though he located the beginning of the Dutch modern movement in the work of Cuypers, Oud held that Berlage's architecture had greater importance, arguing that it attempted to link the rational construction advocated by Cuypers to the sentiments of modern society.<sup>57</sup> The choice of Berlage as the fulcrum on which modernism leveraged itself in Holland was not unusual; other historians and architects of this period had also often credited Berlage with this position.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Oud followed a path of "projection" that Berlage had forged with Cuypers. Like Berlage with Cuypers, Oud took advantage of Berlage's status to support his design choices, but also made clear how his architecture was distinct so not to fall into competition with him.<sup>59</sup>

Oud maintained, however, that the foundation that Berlage had created in his search for a new style manifested itself both in the expressionistic Amsterdam School and in the more rational approach to architecture that he himself advocated. By introducing an analysis of the Amsterdam School into his historical narrative, Oud acknowledged the contribution of this movement to the development of Dutch architecture, while defining his own provisional modernism by questioning the movement's social tenets. In doing so, Oud seems to have been warning the reader, in effect, that the advancement of architecture needed a balance of principled aesthetic choices and responsive design.

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hindering me still more." Lawrence Graf to J.J.P. Oud, 8 July 1926. In a sense, Oud's time with Berlage was more personally rewarding, due to his maturity as an architect, and may this may have prejudiced Oud further towards accepting the common argument that Berlage more than Cuypers influenced the development of modern architecture in Holland.

57. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 13.

58. Van der Woud, 173–78, 192.

59. Van der Woud, 174.

Oud claimed that the Amsterdam School practiced an unsuccessful reading of Berlage in which the design, rather than the needs of the inhabitants, determined the form of the architecture. Although Oud expressed some skepticism over Berlage's ability to fully reconcile the aesthetic and technical aspects of a building, he believed that the Amsterdam School went even further in its emphasis on the aesthetic at the expense of the practical:

Although the construction captures a preconceived place in the entire complex of factors, which influence artistic creation, the constructive demands of chairs, of a lamp or of a house should not be more or less the starting point for their aesthetic form, but rather should the practical needs of the comfort of the citizens be the foundation in the first place . . .<sup>60</sup>

Together, the aesthetic and the technical led the movement—or so Oud argued—towards a design that never questioned the necessity of connecting forms to the social needs of the inhabitants. The result of this disjunction between the two was a modern formalism.

In departing from the academic tradition of the Beaux-Arts, and from the concerns of more rationally driven modern architecture, Oud believed that the Amsterdam School failed to establish a connection between form and the social consequences of form. He stated that, “De Klerk to Kramer and van der May have taken that which appears fully Romantic and fantastic without still even a little worry

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60. “Wenn auch die Konstruktion im Gesamtkomplex des baukünstlerischen Gestaltungsverfahrens einen vornehmen Platz einnimmt, so sollen doch nicht die konstruktiven Forderungen irgendeines Stuhles, irgendeiner Lampe oder irgendeines Hauses mehr oder weniger Ausgangspunkt für ihre ästhetische

about the Style problem.”<sup>61</sup> For Oud, “the style problem” and its social consequences were one and the same since Oud believed that modern style was the result of an architect’s aesthetic response to the needs of the moment, while the concerns of the Amsterdam School only offered formal solutions. Oud understood the Amsterdam School as promoting an architecture with finite possibilities, because it attempted to solve the tension between outer and inner form, rather than to grow from this evolving tension like Oud’s provisional position.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast, Oud’s concept of architecture appeared to be a logical evolution from Berlage to the avenue that offered the greatest opportunity to connect structure with society. Early in his essay, Oud proposed that new architecture should transform itself to respond to the collective need, rather than to the individual feeling.<sup>63</sup> Instead of describing how architecture and the collective might be resolved, he argued that this process evolved over time: “Cause and effect are inseparably attached and always follow each other in the way things happen, there is no beginning and no end, there is only movement.”<sup>64</sup> The movement that Oud was referring to represented the search that Cuypers and Berlage had begun for the rational principles of architecture. Oud continued their search (both in this essay and in his architectural practice) and transformed it into a dynamic process that sought to create a balance between the design and the social needs of the public. Rather than merely linking the technical form to the rational mind (as he had criticized Berlage for doing), Oud maintained that the

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Formgebung sein, sondern es soll vielmehr die Grundlage dazu in erster Linie von den praktischen Bedürfnissen des bequemen Sitzens. . .” J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 22.

61. Ibid., 27.

62. J.J.P. Oud, “De moderne en modernste bouwkunst,” *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 37 (1916): 341–42.

63. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 9–12.

64. “Ursache und Wirkung hängen untrennbar zusammen und folgen immerwährend aufeinander im Laufe des Geschehens: es gibt keinen Anfang und kein Ende: es gibt nur Bewegung.” Ibid., 12.

pursuit of the rational would give the greatest satisfaction in living.<sup>65</sup> The inner necessity of man was to be transformed into structure by finding a balance point between theory and built form.

The tension that Oud witnessed in architecture also existed between the functional needs of the building and the architect's desire to give functional needs an artistic expression in a single design ("a unity of aesthetic and practical art has come together").<sup>66</sup> Oud wrote that a lack of ornament, combined with technical progress artistically applied, produced a style that was beautiful in its practicality:

Not only the technical and not only the aesthetic, not only the rational and not only the spiritual, but rather both harmoniously working together should be the goal of architectural works.<sup>67</sup>

In many ways, style and structure played parallel roles; both served to mediate between social need and aesthetic expression.

The dynamic nature of the relationship between the aesthetic and the practical also extended to Oud's critique of style. Oud held that style continually evolved. This concept was an extension of Berlage's notion of style that rescued the concept from nineteenth century historicism since it located style in an undefined future character identity for modern society.<sup>68</sup> Style was not an endpoint; it was a continuous pursuit of a

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65. Ibid., 22.

66. Ibid., 50.

67. Ibid., 57.

68. Then again, Berlage's idea about locating style in society had its own historical basis in the work of Eugen Heinrich Gugel, a German who taught at the Polytechnic School in Delft. His *History of Styles in the Main Architectural Periods* (1869) remained a work of reference for Dutch architects through the turn of the century and in which he expressed the idea of style originating in society. Van der Woud, 57, 198.

shifting balance between necessity and artistic application.<sup>69</sup> Oud expressed this very sentiment most concisely in an article that he wrote in 1924 in response to Le Corbusier's dogmatic insistence that the house must become "a machine for living." Again, Oud emphasized that the "cause" of architecture should direct the efforts of the architect—rather than the unclear "effect" that Le Corbusier called for. The house was more than a machine for living; it responded to the inhabitants' specific needs and situations.<sup>70</sup>

The series of photos that accompanied his article reinforced the idea of a balance between the artistic and the practical. Oud illustrated "The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland" with images that bore descriptive titles, rather than long, discursive captions that integrated the images with the text, as he had done in "The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities." In this way the images formed an independent and second visual argument for the transition from historical roots to a rational style, especially since most of the photos contained no human figures, thus emphasizing the form of the buildings. Many German modernists, and international historians and critics such as Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, would later adopt this format in their analyses of the development of modern architecture.<sup>71</sup> By including pictures of several foreign structures as the final images of

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69. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 62.

70. J.J.P. Oud, "Vers une Architecture," *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 91 (1924): 93–4. Oud further supported this viewpoint in his article "Ja und Nein: Bekenntnisse Eines Architekten," which he added to the Bauhausbücher edition of 1929. In a series of short statements, he wrote, "I bend a knee for the wonder of the technical, but I do not believe that an auto can be compared with the Parthenon," (93), and later in the essay that, "a house for me is more than a machine for living" (94).

71. Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Modern Architecture Since 1922*, and Bruno Taut, *Die Neue Baukunst in Europa und Amerika* (Stuttgart: J. Hoffmann, 1979 [1929]).

the text, Oud implied that the spirit behind his architecture had spread beyond the borders of Holland without having to say so explicitly.<sup>72</sup>

The resolution of modern form did not need a revolution; rather, it needed an evolution to an equilibrium. Oud played the important role of establishing this balance between form and necessity by unifying the two in an artistic application. Distinguishing his approach from those of other architects, as he had attempted to do in the final images of this article, became his next endeavor—one that he would pursue by analyzing Frank Lloyd Wright's influence on European architecture.

### ***The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe (1925)***

In the fall of 1923, Oud returned from celebrating the achievements of the Bauhaus in Germany by delivering "The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland" as a lecture during its Bauhaus Week. At this event, Oud witnessed the realization of two ideas expressed in his lecture. First, the international nature of the movement was a tangible reality, and as the sole architect outside the Bauhaus that had been invited to deliver a lecture, he had become a recognized leader of that movement. Second, his involvement with the Bauhaus celebration highlighted his status as practitioner in Holland, since he was internationally famous for being able to construct housing of a kind that the Bauhaus only discussed theoretically.<sup>73</sup>

Oud held an elevated status at the Bauhaus not only because he presented his own ideas, but also because he had provided ample information about, and documentation of, Frank Lloyd Wright's work. Through his international contacts and his

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72. Le Corbusier-Saunier, Landhaus in Vaucresson, 1923; Walter Gropius mit Adolf Meyer, Theater in Jena, 1922; Knud Lönberg-Holm, Entwurf für das Hochhaus der "Chicago Tribune," 1922.

Bauhaus visit, Oud had come to realize that there was a need for a more comprehensive analysis of Wright's work than afforded by the Wasmuth portfolios, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (1910) and *Frank Lloyd Wright: Ausgeführte Bauten* (1911).<sup>74</sup> In addition, Oud had come into contact with Wright's work in 1912 through Berlage's lectures, upon Berlage's return from his American travels.<sup>75</sup> Berlage's lectures had reinforced ideas expressed in Wright's writings about the organic origin of architecture. Rather than copying forms of the past, Wright, and hence Berlage, advocated an architecture that was "an outgrowth of conditions of life and work" and the result of "an organic working out" by the creative mind of an architect.<sup>76</sup> These concepts influenced Oud's formation of his provisional modernism that also called for theory tempered by practice.

These initial contacts led him to his first attempt to critique Wright's work in several essays in *De Stijl* where he addressed Wright's design process as much as his forms. Like Berlage, Oud concentrated on Wright's forms in his early analyses, defining Wright's architecture by its shifting planes, projecting roofs and masses, both interrupted and continuous.<sup>77</sup> The placement of the masses also interested Oud,

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73. I discuss this topic in chapter 2.

74. There were actually two publications on Wright produced by Wasmuth at this time. The more lavish and well-known publication was Frank Lloyd Wright, *Ausgeführte Bauten und Entwürfe von Frank Lloyd Wright* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1910). The smaller, and less expensive publication was Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Ausgeführte Bauten* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1911). The latter publication was also produced in an American edition, Frank Lloyd Wright, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Chicago* (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1911).

75. Berlage traveled to America in November and December of 1911. He described these travels in his book, *Amerikaansche Reisherinneringen*. Hendrik Petrus Berlage, *Amerikaansche Reisherinneringen* (Rotterdam: W.L. & J. Brussee, 1913).

76. Detlef Mertins, "Living in a Jungle: Mies, Organic Architecture, and the Art of City Building," in *Mies in America*, ed., Phyllis Lambert, (New York: Harry Abrams, 2001), 592.

77. See J.J.P. Oud, "Architectonische Beschouwing Bij Bijlage VIII," *De Stijl* 1, no. 4 (1918): 39–41, where Oud wrote, "The grouping of the masses is pictorial, as there appears in the composition a beautiful balance" (40). Oud also briefly mentioned Wright in "Kunst en Machine," where he wrote, "Where architecture has already long been achieving plastic expression through the machine [Wright], painting is

because he noted that the total structure had an “equilibrium.”<sup>78</sup> Oud had already begun to investigate the fusion of the fractured and the solid in his associations with De Stijl, but Wright’s work pushed him to new applications of this concept in his designs.

Following a pattern of writing in conjunction with building now familiar in his design process, Oud attempted to integrate ideas from Wright’s architecture into his own designs, as seen most clearly in his proposal for a factory and warehouse in Purmerend (1919). (Figure 11) Taking horizontal elements from Wright, Oud applied them to accent and disrupt his massings of plain concrete boxes. Oud predominantly represented the building in a perspective drawing that showed the structure unfolding in two directions from a corner defined by irregular placement of eaves and windows mimicking the patterns seen in Wright’s works.<sup>79</sup>

Frustrated when the commission for the factory and warehouse did not materialize, Oud returned to writing with a longer and broader analysis of Wright in a special issue of *Wendingen* (1918–1932) dedicated solely to Wright’s architecture. His article, “The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe,” both critiqued Wright’s architecture and attempted to assess its significance on the Continent.<sup>80</sup> This essay supported Oud’s theoretical ideas by criticizing Wright’s positions, and it continued to internationalize the historical framework that Oud constructed for the Dutch modernism by contrasting Dutch architecture with modern

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being impelled inevitably towards the same plastic means and a unity in the pure expression of the spirit of the age is making a spontaneous appearance” J.J.P. Oud, “Kunst en Machine,” 26.

78. J.J.P. Oud, “Architectonische Beschouwing Bij Bijlage VIII,” 40.

79. For more information on this project see: Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 150–157 and see Esser, 140.

80. J.J.P. Oud, “The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe,” *Wendingen* 7 (1925): 85-91. See also, J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*.



architectural ideas outside of Holland. Most importantly, though, it highlighted the provisional nature of Wright's modernism shared with Oud's and also where it differed.

The choice of Oud as one of the authors to analyze Wright for *Wendingen* appears unusual, for the journal supported the Amsterdam School, often in competition with *De Stijl*, but it attests to the respect that Henricus Theodorus Wijdeveld, the first editor of the journal, felt for Oud's previous analyses of Wright and Oud's well-known design for the factory and warehouse in Purmerend. *Wendingen* was published by Architectura et Amicitia, an organization of architects based in Amsterdam that had long been fascinated by the "organic" aspects of Wright's work. Wijdeveld wished to bring together critical appraisals and photographs of Wright's work in a single issue. Both Oud's previous cogent analyses of Wright's work in his *De Stijl* articles and the fact that he had largely severed his relationship with Van Doesburg at this point, encouraged Wijdeveld to ask Oud to participate.<sup>81</sup>

By making it the goal of his essay to understand the philosophy of Wright's architecture rather than its form, Oud argued for a modernism that evolved with social requirements—an idea that he had advocated more directly in other articles. Acknowledging the influence of Wright on European modernism, Oud discounted much of this trend as simple imitation at the expense of a deeper understanding of Wright's philosophical positions. Oud, as he had done in his analysis of the modern Dutch architectural movement, created a framework where his own architecture gained distinction through comparison, in this case with Wright's ideas and architecture. In a sense, Oud created a modern history for himself that now took into account the larger

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81. Oud was particularly dedicated to Wijdeveld's fusion of all the arts. See, Martijn Le Coultre, *Wendingen, 1918–1932*, in *Wendingen: A Journal for the Arts, 1918–1932*, 43.

international movement, or at the very least, one of its main protagonists, as a figure against whom he could distinguish himself through shared affinities and differences in interpretation of the origins of European architecture.

Oud brought a different sensibility to his understanding of Wright than his predecessor Berlage. Berlage concentrated on Wright's materials, proportions, and forms, Oud focused on Wright's ability to unify the needs of the individual and those of the community: "So natural was the interlacing of the elements . . . so reasonable was the arrangement of the spaces, that nobody doubted the inevitable necessity of this form-language for ourselves . . ." <sup>82</sup> The concept of a continually evolving style proposed in "The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland" based in a language of forms that responded to human needs were the natural, balanced compositions Oud saw in Wright's architecture. Wright's architecture captured Oud's simple goal behind his concept of an architectural equilibrium—an equilibrium no longer just in forms but one that fused form and necessity so that "universal meaning and individual result were absolutely one." <sup>83</sup> The focus on meaning rather than universal forms merged Oud's original interests in De Stijl with a need to respond to present conditions rather than utopian ideals.

Only focusing on forms, Oud argued, allowed European architects to imitate Wright and blocked the true recognition by these architects of the contribution of

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82. J.J.P. Oud, "The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe," 86.

83. J.J.P. Oud, "The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe," 87. Oud expressed a similar opinion in "Kunst en Machine." "Great art stands in a casual relationship with the social striving of the age. The longing to make the individual subservient to the social is to be found in everyday life as well as in art, reflected in the need to organize individual elements into groups, associations, confederations, companies, trusts, monopolies, ect. This parallelism of intellectual and social striving, which is necessary for culture, forms the basis for style."

cubism.<sup>84</sup> A familiarity with cubism confounded the principles of Wright's manipulations of space, allowing European architects to follow Wright's forms rather than his theories to the detriment of a more complete understanding of Wright's philosophy. This was an argument encouraged by Van Doesburg several years before when Oud was still working with him so that Oud, and thus De Stijl, could develop a distinction from other Dutch architects also influenced by Wright. Oud essentially followed this argument with a not-so-veiled attack on fellow Dutch architects such as Dudok and Robert van t'Hoff, whose designs Oud viewed as an attempt to capture Wright's forms rather than his concepts. By discounting these efforts and clarifying cubism's relationship to Wright's influence, Oud placed himself at the center of integrating cubism and its affinities with Wright's principles without allowing Wright to overshadow these local contributions to the advancement of architectural thinking.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the formal similarities between several of Wright's works and some cubist designs, Oud believed that cubism held greater potential for the advancement of European modern architecture than did Wright's play of planes and masses, due to Oud's perception of the social foundation of its division of space. Whereas Wright's architecture was intended for the upper class client, Oud claimed that cubism arose from a greater social movement:

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84. Two studies focus specifically on Wright's relationship to Europe and Maristella Casciato's article analyzes the specific case of the Netherlands. See Alofsin; Langmead and Johnson; and Maristella Casciato, "The Dutch Reception of Frank Lloyd Wright: An Overview," in *The Education of an Architect*, ed., Martha Pollak (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 139–152.

85. Oud recounted in the accompanying text of the Lawrence Graf letter of 8 July 1926 his first association with cubism occurring just after he had started to work as an independent architect: ". . . in my mind there was absolutely a great signification in this painting and especially for architecture." J.J.P. Oud to Lawrence Graf, 8 July 1926.

Cubism in architecture—this should be grasped clearly—arose in complete independence of Wright, just like in free art and suggested by it, from within . . . What was with Wright, however plastic exuberance, sensuous abundance, was in the case of cubism—it could not for the present be otherwise—puritanical asceticism, mental abstinence. What with Wright out of the very fullness of life developed into a luxurious growth which could only suit American “high-life,” compelled itself in Europe to the humble level of an abstraction which had its origin in other wants and embraced all men and things.<sup>86</sup>

Wright offered a form of provisional modernism, but one that could not respond to European needs—particularly those concerning social housing. Instead, cubism arose from the ideals and social conditions in Europe and therefore represented a means of thinking that inspired Oud’s attempt to balance the two ideas in built form.<sup>87</sup>

Highlighting the distinction between their provisional approaches, Oud also intended to reveal the danger in copying Wright’s forms. Oud hoped that by revealing the problem of formal imitation he could shift the focus of the article to Wright’s philosophy—a philosophy, despite its inspiration, that encouraged constant experimentation. Oud had already advanced a similar concept in different forms in both “The Future of Modern Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities” and “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland.” He turned to Wright in an effort to

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86. J.J.P. Oud, “The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe,” 88.

87. This opinion may also be based on Oud’s belief that Wright did not have to overcome an existing architectural tradition in America, whereas the European architects had to respond to the existing tradition, so that their architecture not only established itself, but also, in doing so, questioned the existing notions of architecture. See J.J.P. Oud, “Architectonische Beschouwing Bij Bijlage VIII,” 39. Oud, however, also saw the energy dedicated to overcoming this tradition as an impediment to the development of the modern tradition. He stated in “Ja und Nein: Bekenntnisse Eines Architekten” that he wished as much energy went into creating the new form of architecture as went into attacking the older form.

make universal his belief that theory was more important than formula through an analysis of Wright's struggle to assert his ideas:

There is something tragic in the fact that to the development of things, which Wright advocated so long and so energetically, harm has been and is still being done, through misconception of his work, by the dilettantism of his own followers. It may be a matter of indifference to us that with Wright himself the conception of the architect outgrew the consciousness of the preacher: because of the beautiful result, because the basic idea of his work is a reasonable one, not confused by aesthetic premises, because, lastly, life which has not become rigid and fixed, continually escapes from the dogma of theory. Theory, however, be this emphasized, is valuable as a basis in life. Valuable always, but altogether indispensable now-a-days, when every aesthetic guidance, each traditional hold is wanting. The new architecture can hardly be too consistent in its aims, and we shall be willing to take into the bargain the inevitable inconsistencies of its results, should they be worthy.<sup>88</sup>

Oud's analysis stressed the responsiveness of Wright's theory in contrast to dogma and its result—inconsistency. The inconsistency of result, though, resulted, as with Oud's architecture, from a consistent application of a responsive design process. In many ways, Oud's recognition of the "misconception" of Wright's forms foreshadowed a similar misconception of Oud's own architecture as a set style rather than one determined by process.

Oud wanted the thinking behind Wright's architecture to be visible in much the same way as he wanted his own ideas to lead his architecture rather than to be derived from it. Oud described the relationship between his thinking and his practice in a letter

of the same period to another American architect, Lawrence Graf: “It seems to me—[my architecture] profited by the method and again came a bit nearer to the architecture of the future as I developed it in my lectures and as I am making it my duty.”<sup>89</sup> To concentrate on form—or worse, to copy form whether the form was that of Wright or that of another modern architect—in Oud’s view, was “pernicious” for the advancement of architecture. Ultimately for Oud, the aim and practice, rather than the forms, of architecture contained the elements for its advancement.

### ***i10: Constructing the International Movement***

By 1927, Oud had established a position of architectural prominence for himself both in Holland and throughout Europe through his architecture and publications. Oud had defined his vision for modern architecture, framed it historically and even compared it to Wright. Despite his elevated status, Oud searched for new ways of extending the debates about the role of modernism and thus promoting his provisional perspective for the role of design theory and practice. Again, writing, but this time not his own writing, offered another means for continuing to promote a provisional and responsive modernism.

Previous efforts to combine social and artistic ideas in a journal, such as *De Stijl* (1917–32) in Holland and *Die Form* (1922–29) in Germany, had all but failed by 1927. Despite this fact, Arthur Lehning, a German anarchist and socially inclined publisher, sought an editor for a new international avant-garde journal, *i10*. Piet Mondrian, a

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88. J.J.P. Oud, “The Influence of Frank Lloyd Wright on the Architecture of Europe,” 89.

89. Lawrence Graf to J.J.P. Oud, 8 July 1926.

frequent contributor to *De Stijl*, recommended that Lehning contact Oud.<sup>90</sup> Mondrian outlined the reasons for this recommendation in a letter to his wife:

Oud agrees. He's even extremely enthusiastic and seeks collaboration with some twenty national and foreign architects . . . He admires my efforts. He wants to remain revolutionary in his field. Not a reformist! But he is not a member of a political party. He feared it would take up too much time, which would be a burden, so he didn't.<sup>91</sup>

Mondrian's description of Oud's strengths as a potential editor reflected why Oud, more than any other figure at this time, was an attractive choice for Lehning's endeavor and revealed aspects of his architectural presentation contained in his three major essays: his belief in a progressive and provisional modernism, his ability to build a framework around his ideas, and his efforts to situate himself nationally and internationally.

When Lehning chose Oud as the primary editor for *i10*, he may have already recognized these qualities even before Mondrian's recommendation since his first contact with Oud had been in Weimar, where Oud had delivered his lecture and had stood out as a leader of international architects. Also, Oud was associated with the combination of text, typography, and images from the publication of his Bauhausbücher during the previous year. The influence of this publication can also be seen in Lehning's choice of Moholy-Nagy as photo editor for *i10*, and of Willem Pijper as music

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90. In this dissertation, I will use *De Stijl* to refer to the group and *De Stijl* to refer to the magazine published from 1917 to 1932.

91. "Oud stemt toe. Is zelfs buitengewoon enthousiast en verzeekt medewerking van een twintig binnen- en buitenlandse architecten. . . Hij vindt het prachtig dat ik zoo iets onderneem. Hij wil op zijn gebed revolutionair bijven. Geen reformisten! Maar het mag geen orgaan zijn van een politeke partij. Vreesde alleen te veel tijd er aan te moeten geven en dat zou bezwaar kunnen zijn, dat hij het niet doet." Letter from Piet Mondrian to Annie Grimmer, 19 May 1926, reprinted in Toke van Helmond, "Un journal est un monsieur," in *i10 sporen van de avant-garde* (Heerlen, 1994), 17.

editor.<sup>92</sup> Although he received help from these two, Oud played a controlling role in determining the content of the magazine, as Lehning himself acknowledged:

Oud's editorial responsibility was to include architecture as well as pictorial art. His stern and perhaps rigid editorial policy—a reproduction of Picasso's representational picture *Fenêtre ouverte* was, I suspect, a great concession—set the tone of the journal, particularly in the first year.<sup>93</sup>

Oud based his editing of the magazine on the same sentiments that drove the design of his buildings: a continual search for an equilibrium that responded to social need with modern forms. In addition, editing Lehning's journal presented Oud with an opportunity to promote his progressive modernism by choosing articles and images that supported his ideas, and to situate himself at the center of an effort to internationalize modern architectural thought.

In fact, the intention of the journal went far beyond simply reforming architecture. The editors argued that a change in society should accompany a shift in the artistic and the built environments. Oud outlined his intention of continuing the search for a unity in the arts in his initial article in the first issue of *i10*:

Under the headings of architecture and the plastic arts, with which I have been entrusted, I do not propose to serve up this future unity to the reader in its final form—not even very approximately. Therefore, the directive for this category will be to account for all the serious experiments of a plastic nature that deal with the expression of human vitality,

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92. Arthur Lehning, "Introduction" in *International Revue i10 1927–1929* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1979).

93. *Ibid.*



free of misunderstood tradition, recognizing—unconditionally and under no matter what forms (mechanical, cinema, advertising, etc. to mention only the examples that are most often challenged at the moment)—the primacy of the natural vital force, the foundation of human instinct, and thus of culture.<sup>94</sup>

Oud still eschewed dogma and continued to advocate the search for a greater union of the arts and society. In this, he differed from many other modernists at this time who were seeking to solidify their theories.

Oud's participation in *i10* extended beyond his work as an editor, since he also wrote several articles for the publication. Many of these articles either expanded arguments that he had made elsewhere or attacked the formalism and strict functionalism that was becoming more pronounced in architecture during this period. Following his initial article outlining his editorial duties, Oud wrote three analyses of the Weissenhof Siedlung, a modern housing exhibition in 1927 in Stuttgart in which Oud had constructed a set of five row houses.<sup>95</sup> Two of the articles dealt directly with the purpose of the exhibition and with the role Oud's project played in realizing that purpose, while the third discussed the role of architecture and the homemaker.<sup>96</sup> Once

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94. En ce qui concerne les rubriques d'architecture et d'arts plastiques, dont je suis chargé, je ne proposerai pas de servir au lecteur cette unité future dans sa forme finale, même très approximativement. . . Par conséquent, la directive de cette rubrique sera de rendre compte de toutes les expérimentations sérieuses de nature plastique qui soient l'expression de la vitalité humaine, libre de toute tradition mal comprise, reconnaissant—sans condition et sous n'importe quelle forme (machinalisme, cinéma, publicité, etc. pour mentionner que les exemples les plus récusés du moment)—la primauté de l'élan vital naturel, fondement de l'instinct humain, donc de la culture. Translated in Annelys Meijer, *i10 et son époque* (Paris: Institut Néerlandais, 1989), 29. From, J.J.P Oud, "Richtlijn," *i10*, no.1 (1927): 2.

95. I will analyze Oud's role in this exhibition at greater length in chapter 2.

96. J.J.P. Oud, "Huisvrouwen en architecten," *i10*, no. 2 (1927): 44–47. J.J.P. Oud, "Internationale architectuur: Werkbund-tentoonstelling 'Die Wohnung' Juli-September 1927, Stuttgart," *i10* 1, no. 6 (1927): 204–5. J.J.P. Oud, "Toelichting op een woningtype van de *Werkbundaustellung Die Wohnung*, Stuttgart," *i10*, no. 11 (1927): 381–84.

again Oud expressed his desire for a unity in architecture that would connect built form to the developing life of modern man:

Unity, that for the universally infinite is more important than division, is thus still so excellent. In the architecture of our directly preceding periods the building art was unimportant, because the building individual himself was of more meaning than the essential question: in the present moment, does architecture begin to flourish because the architect is secondary to his desire to make this instruction. He creates nothing greater than haughty self-serving structures and nothing lower than rough pursuits of effect; there arose: level, style. It "serves" and strives to serve in a domain of clarity and uncomplicatedness. It has able contact with life; it becomes as resilient as life itself, which wanders here and there . . . it becomes a single part the inner and outer.<sup>97</sup>

Oud returned to his idea—expressed consistently in his writings since "The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities"—of the merging of inner and outer and the enduring quality of an evolving balance of theory and built form. Oud further strengthened his call for a provisional modernism by situating his concept of a connection between modern man and architecture within a group of articles that reinforced his position by expressing a similar outlook. These included an article by Mart Stam, another modern Dutch architect, and a review of the Weissenhof by the avant-garde German artist Kurt Schwitters.<sup>98</sup>

Oud also used *i10* to continue his argument for the internationalization of the movement. Drawing articles from such authors as Walter Benjamin, Cor van Eesteren,

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97. J.J.P. Oud, "Internationale architectuur: Werkbund-tentoonstelling 'Die Wohnung,' 204

98. Mart Stam, "Drie Woningen op de Tentoonstelling te Stuttgart," *i10*, no. 10 (1927): 342–45. Kurt Schwitters, "Stuttgart, Die Wohnung," *i10*, no. 10 (1927): 345–48.

and Hans Arp, Oud delivered a journal that insisted on documenting the still unfinished business of the avant-garde. Oud also turned the eyes of the journal overseas to the fledgling attempts at modernism in America. An exchange of articles between Henry Russell Hitchcock, the noted American architectural historian who would help bring Oud's architecture to an American audience, and Knud Lönberg-Holm (1895–1972), a Danish architect living and working in America, revealed the divergent views of modernism that would later become a serious problem for Oud. Lönberg-Holm wrote about the potential for European design to flourish in America, thanks to the efficiency of industrial production, which could connect form with society. Hitchcock countered this view, noting that "An aesthetic conscience comes in America to set form, that aesthetic conscience, more "disembodied", more "pure" than that of Europe, is far less likely to forget architecture the art for architecture as a part of sociology."<sup>99</sup> Capturing competing international views was one of Oud's main goals for the journal. He little dreamt how the divergence of these views would directly affect him in the future, when his architecture "arrived" in America.

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99. Knud Lönberg-Holm, "America," *I10*, no. 15 (1928): 49–55. Henry Russell Hitchcock, "America-Europe," *I10*, no. 20 (1928): 150.

Although Oud desired a larger international movement, this did not mean that he wished to lose the association with the Netherlands. Just as *i10* published articles in various languages with accompanying abstracts in English, German, and French, so too did Oud believe that “international” described a movement of varying ideas and degrees of application, rather than a single global formula. Oud argued that his nationality might have given him an inclination towards new ideas about architecture, but that it was necessary to pursue those ideas beyond the borders of his country:

It was necessary that in Holland one offer to architecture and the plastic arts the opportunity to be published, as this journal proposes. Abroad, the whole of the avant-garde depends heavily on that which was begun by the Dutch, while here, it seems hardly possible to understand the work in question.

A broader and deeper examination shows, however; that an enormous number of things have happened, that new paths have been opened, making possible a more trenchant perception, that—since in the end, everything came from the same source, that is to say, from the desire for universality—very broad universal human perspectives have been revealed. One of the first merits of the present revue is that it intends to look for in all the domains—to also enter into confrontations—the universality in question that seems to be revealing itself everywhere.<sup>100</sup>

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100. Il était nécessaire qu'en Hollande on offre à l'architecture et aux arts plastiques l'occasion d'être publié, comme cette revue se le propose. A l'étranger, toute une avant-garde s'appuie beaucoup sur qui a été mis en route par des Hollandais, alors qu'ici même il semble à peine possible de prendre connaissance du travail en question. . .

Un examen plus large et plus approfondi montre toutefois qu'énormément de choses se sont passés, que de nouvelles voies ont été ouvertes, permettant une perception plus incisive, que—puisque en fin de compte, tout provenait d'une même source, c'est-à-dire du désir d'universalité—des perspectives humaines universelles très larges ont été dévoilées. Translated in Annelys Meijer, 29. From, J.J.P Oud, “Richtlijn,” 2.

The search for art and architecture that expressed the new spirit was universal, though the process was national. Therefore, if Oud could connect with other national movements and gain recognition within those countries, his ideas would gain influence both within and outside Holland. At the same time, Oud's activities abroad would benefit the modern movement within each country, for they signaled the gravity of each country's modernists' ideas by suggesting that an interest in those ideas extended beyond the borders of individual countries.

Of course, each time Oud's provisional modernism came into contact with a different national modern movement, it was open to interpretation. The next two sections of my study investigate the processes behind the formation of these interpretations, specifically in pre-World War II Germany and America. Entering these movements largely as an unknown architect, Oud did not promote his ideas from a position of acquired recognition, as in the Netherlands, but as a newcomer willing to utilize any method of reception to develop interpretations and expectations for his architecture.

## Chapter 2

### Provisional Modernist Abroad: Attaining Prominence Through Multiple Receptions

By the end of 1921, Oud focused his energies on establishing connections with the modern German architectural movement over the next decade. At the same time, he was attempting to put his provisional modernism into action in the Netherlands in his housing projects. These buildings attracted post-WWI German modernists to Oud's socially-based rationalism, and ironically, mirrored Oud's interest before the war in the concepts and architecture of leaders of the Deutsche Werkbund.<sup>1</sup> Of course, German modernism emerged from the war much different from what it had been a few years earlier. Beginning in 1918, cells of artists and architects founded organizations in nearly every major German city, with the intention of developing a role for modern art in the new culture of the Weimar Republic.<sup>2</sup> Working, at times, with the Werkbund, these fractured groups turned first to the spiritual expression of art with an emphasis on handicraft to bring the arts into a new synthesis only to veer towards more rationally inspired design beginning in the mid-1920s.<sup>3</sup>

Within the Werkbund, Walter Gropius and Bruno Taut led a movement to radicalize this organization's views on modernism, linking a search for form and type to

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1. For a general description of the organization, see Lucius Burckhardt, ed., *The Werkbund: History and Ideology, 1907–1933* (Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's, 1980) or Fredric Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

2. Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 42.

3. Although emerging in a different manifestation, many connections still existed between the two modern movements. For example, Stanford Anderson argues that the romantic efforts of architects and artists following World War One were inspired by Behrens efforts before the war to resolve “knowledge and action.” These artists and architects attempted to put the spirit of his works into form in the postwar period. Stanford Anderson, *Peter Behrens and a New Architecture for the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 258–259.

the spirit of the “new man.”<sup>4</sup> They also organized their own groups outside of the Werkbund, such as Novembergruppe (1918–1921) and subsequently, the Arbeitsrat für Kunst (AFK) (1918–21). The Werkbund and these artistic groups sought an “alliance of the arts under the wing of a great architecture.”<sup>5</sup> They looked outside of Germany for productive examples of such an alliance, and found one in Oud’s housing, which shared their concern for merging social demands and modern design into a single expression. German modernists also valued Oud’s work more highly because it existed as built form rather than merely as a set of theoretical constructs.

Oud followed these developments through German architectural journals, and through avant-garde publications such as *Der Strum* (1910–1922) and *Die Form* (1925–1934) that were widely available in Holland. Oud’s interest in German modernism arose with the hope for new theoretical insights into the practical application of modern design concepts that he struggled with in his Spangen housing projects. In addition, Oud was sympathetic to the structure of the German groups—a structure that drew together artists, architects, and thinkers—because he had participated in several similar collaborations in Holland.

This chapter will investigate German modernist receptions of Oud’s architecture through three processes: Oud’s relationships with influential individuals in the modern German architectural movement, his participation in important competitions and exhibitions, and his own efforts to promote his provisional modernism through lectures and publications in Germany. Oud’s first direct contact with German modernism came

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4. Wolfgang Pehnt, “Distant Goals, Great Hopes: The Deutscher Werkbund 1918-1924,” in *The Werkbund*, ed., Lucius Burckhardt (London: The Design Council, 1980), 72–80.

through a competition to design a house in Berlin in 1921—a competition that Oud won. His triumph testified to his experience with modern building techniques and it put him into contact with influential modernists in the German movement including: Adolf Behne, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Bruno Taut, Walter Gropius, Adolf Meyer, and Ludwig Hilberseimer. Each of these figures gave Oud important early contacts with other influential individuals, institutions, and publications that helped to shape German modernism.

Through these contacts, Oud was invited to give lectures, publish articles, and participate in significant exhibitions. Combinations of these activities continued to increase Oud's prominence in the German movement. At the same time, Oud attempted to leverage his newfound international status to make his designs more desirable in Holland. Although this strategy generally increased Oud's ability to build in Holland, foreign influence on Dutch modernism did have its limits. Oud realized these limits following his failure to win the competition for the Rotterdam Bourse (1926) despite the lobbying efforts by German modernists. Oud's participation in the Weissenhof Siedlung, which followed his participation in the 1923 Bauhaus Exhibition, marked the high point of his involvement in Germany, since it provided him a forum to illustrate the importance of the building process to his provisional modernism through actual construction.

Despite many critics recognizing the quality of Oud's Weissenhof housing, Oud began to refocus his attention on his work in the Netherlands, and by 1930, he ceased to produce new articles and projects in Germany. While his legacy remained, his

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5. Bruno Taut, "'Arbeitsrat für Kunst' in Berlin" *Mitteilungen des deutschen Werkbundes*, no. 4 (1918), 14–15. Also see translation in *German Expressionism*, ed., Rose-Carol Washton Long (Berkeley:



position in ongoing German debates quickly faded as more contemporary perspectives made his views relevant only to historians of the recent past. By analyzing specific instances of Oud's association with the German modernist movement, it is possible to see how specific types of reception of his provisional modernism determined Oud's trajectory through that movement.

### ***Pre World War One Contacts with the Modern German Architectural Movement***

Oud's initial interest in German architecture, and his formative ideas about provisional modernism, arose long before he became engaged in the famous factional debates that took place in Germany between the wars. Early in his career, Oud developed a pattern of involvement with German architecture that combined personal work on design projects with written articles. In 1911, with Berlage's encouragement, Oud visited Theodor Fischer's office in Munich. Fischer, a founding member of the Werkbund and its first president (1907), led an architectural office that mixed historical precedent with contemporary practical design to shape the city's urban fabric. Even though he stayed for only three months and no evidence exists that he actually "worked" in the office, Oud often referred to Fischer as an influence on his architecture, and sometimes as an early "teacher."<sup>6</sup> Oud was probably drawn to Fischer's interest in new ideas, and to his efforts to contextualize each design in its surrounding urban fabric—a

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University of California Press, 1993), 192–197.

6. Winfried Nerdinger, *Theodor Fischer: Architekt und Städbauer 1862–1938*. Nerdinger noted that even though twenty-six projects were being either designed or built at the time, he could not find Oud's name associated with any of them. On the other hand, Oud often refers to Fischer as an early teacher. See, for example, the Oud's text accompanying a letter of 8 July 1926 from Lawrence Graf, an American architect, and his letter to the Head Architect of Munich of 27 November 1927. Lawrence Graf to J.J.P. Oud, 8 July 1926, File 32, Oud Archive and J.J.P. Oud to Head Architect of Munich, 27 November 1927, File 46, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

concept also promoted by Berlage. In Fischer's office, Oud may also have been introduced to the name of Bruno Taut, an architect in the office from 1904 to 1908.<sup>7</sup>

Oud's interaction with Fischer's practice, combined with his growing interest in the development of German modernist art and architecture, led him to publish a number of articles following his return to Holland that promoted a greater study by the Dutch of how these disciplines were practiced within Germany. In two different articles published in 1913, Oud suggested the progressive questioning of the nature of the arts and architecture in Germany might serve as a model for the Netherlands. In "German Art," he argued that Germany had emerged from its past as a design laggard and now produced art and design that the Dutch could use as inspiration for their own designs.<sup>8</sup> He struck a similar tone in "Introduction to the Shipping Exhibition," defending Germany against the common Dutch criticism that it was a culturally empty country, while specifically noting several designs that took into account their immediate surroundings.<sup>9</sup> Oud also reviewed Hermann Muthesius's influential book *Das Englische Haus* (1904–1905). While he was critical of Muthesius's conservative approach and excessively didactic tone, Oud noted the benefit of seeking architectural examples outside of one's own country.<sup>10</sup> Rather than concentrate on the growing debates within the Werkbund that had created division among its members by its noted exhibition of 1914, Oud's analysis looked to Germany for what was useful. Oud again turned his

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7. Neideringer actually argues that Fischer, rather than Behrens may be the true mentor of modern architects, because Erich Mendelsohn, Le Corbusier, Hugo Häring, and Ernst May, among others, all studied or worked under him at one time. Neideringer, 86.

8. J.J.P. Oud, "Duitsche Kunst," *De Wereld*, 3 October 1913, 11.

9. J.J.P. Oud, "Naar aanleiding van 'Van de Scheepvaarttentoonstelling,'" *De Wereld*, 18 July 1913.

10. J.J.P. Oud, "Landhäuser von Hermann Muthesius," *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, vol. 33 (1913): 589.

gaze towards Germany following World War I, but discovered a modern movement greatly transformed by a society ruptured by the war.

### ***Proposing Models of Reception: Points of Contact in the Postwar Debates***

Oud's advocacy for a provisional modernism allowed his ideas to be embraced by several groups across the spectrum of the postwar German modernist movement. Oud's concept that design needed to respond to social need was an idea that many of these groups promoted and supported through articles and exhibitions. Oud's key contacts in Germany—Moholy-Nagy, Behne, and Taut—participated in and held positions of influence in several of these organizations. By understanding their models of reception that presented Oud as a practitioner able to combine expressive qualities and rational design in his architecture, his provisional approach provides a model for future German architecture.

Although Moholy-Nagy, Behne, and Taut, all appreciated the pragmatism of Oud's provisional modernism, each one chose different aspects in their readings making their combined efforts complementary rather than contradictory. By 1920, the date of the first German language article on Oud, his work was not completely unknown to architects in Germany. As I mentioned in chapter 1, he had already published several articles in *De Stijl* and he had designed city housing projects in Rotterdam, though few people outside of Holland knew about these projects. Therefore, Adolf Behne's introduction of Oud's architecture to Germany in a series of articles published in prominent modernist journals presented the first series of an ongoing analysis that argued for the inclusion of international works of architecture in German architectural

debates, both as an inspiration to German architecture and as a proof of the ubiquity of the modernist movement. Behne saw an affinity in Oud's work to his own ideas about a typology of technically produced geometric forms that could function in a number of combinations.<sup>11</sup>

Bruno Taut, who, like Oud, worked under the constraints of a municipal architect attempting to apply modernist design principles to low-cost housing, saw Oud's forms and ideas as offering new solutions to his design problems. Taut and Oud maintained an extensive correspondence during the 1920s driven by Taut's interest in Oud as a practitioner and Taut's ability to provide Oud with an idea of how his ideas might be received in Germany. At the same time that Behne and Taut began their receptions of Oud, Moholy-Nagy had just arrived in Germany. Moholy-Nagy quickly became an intense participant in the movement and lent a sympathetic ear to Oud's theories since they seemed to offer the means for a transition from art to rational architecture without the loss of artistic expression. Moholy-Nagy also provided Oud a means of publishing his ideas in the German language while at the same time presenting a perspective on how to integrate foreign positions into German debates.

Oud's architecture was introduced to the German modernist movement by one of the most prominent critics of the period, Adolf Behne. Between 1910 and 1933, Behne published over five hundred essays on modern art and architecture in the leading modernist journals in and outside of Germany.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Behne established many influential personal relationships through his active participation in postwar artistic

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11. Detlef Mertins, "Living in a Jungle: Mies, Organic Architecture, and the Art of City Building," in *Mies in America*, ed., Phyllis Lambert (New York: Harry Abrams, 2001), 609–11.

12. Kenneth Frampton, "The Dialectics of Functionalism: Adolf Behne and Sigfried Giedeon," *Design Book Review*, no. 39 (1997): 18–21.

groups, including the Novembergruppe, the Arbeitstrat für Kunst, and the Glass Chain (1919-1920). Even though these short-lived fraternities of architects, artists, and thinkers all dissolved by 1921, their personal relationships remained and helped to make Oud's architecture more widely known by individual communication.

Adolf Behne, however, did not wait for Oud to come to Germany. He met Oud on a trip to Holland in 1920, as the recently named German correspondent for the English periodical, *The Studio*.<sup>13</sup> The initial meeting with Behne immediately proved fruitful for Oud's architectural production. It was Behne who introduced him to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, the chief advisor for a competition to design a private home, the "Kallenbach House" (1921–1922), in Berlin. (Figures 12 & 13) This competition raised Oud's profile in Germany, first, by putting him in direct contact with the modernist movement, and second, because he won the commission. Oud's victory in the competition may have come from his sober grouping of cubic forms and planar walls, punctuated by unornamented window openings—a design that stood in startling contrast to the more expressionistic designs of the other competitors, such as two of the future leaders of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer.<sup>14</sup> These two men would not forget the divergence of designs that revealed Oud's subtle command of the concepts of rational planning when they invited him several years later to lecture at the Bauhaus.<sup>15</sup>

Behne's reception of Oud's architecture allowed him to make an important shift in his position within the modernist movement due to the provisional nature of Oud's

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13. Rosemarie Haag Bletter, "Introduction" in *The Modern Functional Building*, Adolf Behne (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Research Institute, 1996), 30.

14. Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (New York: Prager, 1973), 114.

15. "It is revealing that the two figures who in 1922-23 were instrumental in directing the Bauhaus away from its Expressionist beginnings—Moholy-Nagy and van Doesburg—were not known to Gropius before Taut and Behne introduced them to him." Bletter, 31. The same could be said for Oud.

message. Behne's article, which expanded on his insights on Oud from his earlier *Frühlicht* publication, appeared not in *The Studio*, but in *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst* (1922). In it, Behne used Oud's architecture to extol a shift from expressionist-inspired ideals to more rationally influenced thinking.<sup>16</sup> The early 1920s marked a point of transition for supporters of expressionist architecture such as Behne and Bruno Taut. Oud's architecture appeared to support Behne's desire for a pan-Europeanism in the arts without making it necessary to relinquish completely the social tenets that had driven the expressionist movement.<sup>17</sup>

Behne's attempt to escape his expressionist past through his critique of modern Dutch architecture may have presented Oud with a template for his own thinking. "Present Day Dutch Architecture" revealed an intimate knowledge not only of recent architectural developments in Holland, but also, specifically, of the role that Oud had played in those developments. Behne's need to eschew his expressionist past—or at least to downplay it—encouraged him to focus on Oud as the linchpin between the older masters Cuypers and Berlage and the new rationalist rebels, while discounting the competing Amsterdam School:

A few years ago, Oud wrote a detailed essay on Berlage's work [1918] (which we might find useful to draw upon here). It evidences well both his deference as well as his

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16. Adolf Behne, "Holländische Baukunst in der Gegenwart," *Wasmuth Monatshefte für Baukunst* 1, no. 1–2 (1922): 1–33.

17. Both Rosemary Haag Bletter and Iain Boyd Whyte suggest that these years were a period of transition for expressionist supporters such as Behne and Taut. Bletter argues that this shift towards a more rational approach to architecture occurred through ideas imbedded in expressionism though not openly acknowledged. Whyte counters this argument by describing the shift as a desperate "jumping off of the ship" by the main proponents of expressionism. Either way, Oud and other architects outside of Germany appear to have provided satisfactory "life-rafts" for these expressionists-turned-rationalists. Bletter; and Iain Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

frankness. . . Oud himself labels this conception of architecture as a rational conception and he strongly opposes all sentimental and romantic influences on architectural production. He concisely describes the meaning of rational architecture as the striving in an organic way, that is to say, working from the inside out and without reading in traditional types of decoration, to give form to social and practical needs, as well as to the technical developments of the time.<sup>18</sup>

Oud's understanding of Dutch architecture in his article on Berlage became Behne's. Behne had gone outside the German modernist movement to analyze the basis of Oud's rational approach in the works of Berlage to return as an advocate for the same process in Germany, thus evolving from his earlier expressionist advocacy. In a similar way, Oud's "The Development of Modern Dutch Architecture: Past, Present and Future," published a year later, followed this same process as it turned to Behne's analysis as a means to elevate his own position in respect to the competing Amsterdam School.

Behne also revealed his familiarity with Oud's work in his critique of Oud's lecture "The Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities" for the modern Dutch journal *Opbouw*. In addition, he followed his *Wasmuths* article with two other German-language articles that dealt with Oud's work at least indirectly.<sup>19</sup> Although these three

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18. "Oud hat vor wenigen Jahren einen ausführlichen Aufsatz über das Werk Berlages geschrieben (den wir hier mit Gewinn als Quelle benutzen konnten), der ein schönes Zeugnis seiner Ehrerbietung wie seines Freimutes ist. . . Oud selbst bezeichnet diese Auffassung der Architektur als eine rationelle Auffassung und er wendet sich scharf gegen alle sentimentalen und romantischen Einflüsse auf das architektonische Schaffen. Den Sinn einer rationellen Baukunst umschreibt er kurz als das Streben, auf organische Weise, d.h. von innen nach außen arbeitend und ohne Hineininterpretierung überlieferter Schmuckformen, die sozialen und praktischen Bedürfnisse, sowie die technischen Fortschritte der Zeit zur Form zu führen." Adolf Behne, "Holländische Baukunst in Der Gegenwart," 6.

19. Adolf Behne, "Von holländische Baukunst," *Feuer* (1920/21): 279–92; "Europa und die Architektur," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 28–33; "Oud: Over de toekomstige bouwkunst en haar architectonische mogelijkheden," *Opbouw*, (Feb. 1921).

articles varied in focus, they all promoted similar themes: that Dutch architecture offered a good model for the German modernist movement, and that Oud's work embodied the proper balance of functionalism and social concern.<sup>20</sup>

Although Behne saw other international movements, such as the Russian and French, as extremes that could be combined to create a productive architecture for the future, he believed that the Dutch movement already possessed a political realism and practicality that made it a viable example for Germany.<sup>21</sup> Oud, more than any other architect, enabled Behne to maintain his belief in the power of the masses while remaining skeptical of the aesthetic and scientific formalism of the rationalists—a skepticism that, as has been shown, Oud himself shared.<sup>22</sup> Behne perceived this shared skepticism in the way in which Oud's architecture merged theoretical concepts with economic constraints and bureaucratic limitations. The effectiveness of Behne's argument for the Dutch as an international model and subsequently of Oud's growing importance in Germany, can be measured by the appearance in 1922 of Behne's *Wasmuths* interpretations in an expanded book form—something that would only have been possible if there was a market for these ideas.<sup>23</sup>

Oud's influence on Behne's criticism continued to grow. It reached its zenith in Behne's polemic, *The Modern Functional Building* (which was written in 1923 although it was first published in 1926). Behne advocated an architecture that closely resembled Oud's in its call for rationally produced geometric forms that could work in various

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20. Alan Colquhoun has suggested that Behne's shift towards a greater functionalism "primarily marked a change in form, and was only partly a change of substance." Alan Colquhoun, "Criticism and Self-Criticism in German Modernism," *AA Files*, no. 28 (1994): 29.

21. Bletter, 44.

22. Colquhoun, 29, 32.

23. Adolf Behne, *Holländische Baukunst in der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1922).



combinations depending on the present demands.<sup>24</sup> Behne strikingly emphasized this similarity in perspective by concluding with a quotation from Oud, even though Oud received little mention otherwise, apart from an illustration of his unbuilt factory at Purmerend (1919):

Political realism and confidence of this kind spare Dutch architecture from swinging from extreme to extreme between opposing dogmas; it allows it the possibility of coping with all the dynamic tensions of our time openly and freely, without abandoning the demand for monumentality; it allows Dutch architecture the possibility of steady development.

“Under the pressure of circumstances and through the expansion of aesthetic insight, it is only now that an architecture shaped by and through itself seems possible, an architecture in which the other arts will not be applied and thus subordinated but one that will work organically together with the other arts; it makes possible an architecture that from the beginning experiences beauty in its constructional functions, that is, an architecture that through the tension of its proportions raises the construction itself above its material necessity to aesthetic form (J.J.P. Oud).”<sup>25</sup>

Since Oud had constructed a number of his designs, Behne believed that Oud provided more than just a shared philosophy, offering the transformation of ideas into form—something that many German architects struggled to achieve in the years immediately following World War I. Oud’s argument that social need and rational production could merge in an aesthetic expression remained an intoxicating international model for Behne and the German modernists.

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24. Mertins, 610–11.

25. Behne, *The Modern Functional Building*, 146.

One of the most important connections that Behne provided Oud was Bruno Taut. Taut and Behne's relationship extended back to their joint membership in various groups of artists, architects, and contemporary thinkers. Before the war, both had been members of the Choriner Kreis (1903–1904), a quasi back-to-nature movement located just outside of Berlin. In the intervening years, they had worked on several joint publications. With the postwar founding of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, a movement that sought the unity of the arts and the people, they expanded their network of contacts and further developed their ideas surrounding the arts and government. Both movements championed a leadership role for artists in a new society, but did not go beyond these vague proclamations, and, therefore, lacked the ability to develop a practical application for their ideas.

In contrast to his participation with these arts groups, Taut had become the municipal architect for the city of Magdeburg in 1921, facing similar economic concerns as Oud. The two men's struggles were closely connected, since they were both trying to apply avant-garde social ideas and new planning concepts within the practical constraints of their roles as municipal architects. Although the municipal positions entailed constraints, they provided a certain amount of job security from which to assert their ideas. In the case of Oud, it also provided the essential ingredient for his provisionalism since the act of building provided the necessary constraints to his theoretical ideas. It is through this shared lens of the practitioner that Taut received Oud's architecture.

Their association allowed Taut to negotiate his transition into more rationalistic planning, and it gave Oud a well-connected advocate for his work within the German

modernist movement. Although Taut initially identified with expressionist architecture, he gravitated towards the work of Oud—his expectations, influenced, perhaps, by Behne's articles. He realized that Oud offered an opportunity to maintain the more vital aspects of the expressionist social framework while discarding the waning formal aspects of the movement. Likewise, Oud benefited from his extensive correspondence with Taut, which spanned the years 1920 to 1930. It offered him a regular perspective on conditions in Germany, and it gave him access to Taut's widespread network of German architectural contacts. Rather than relying solely on Behne's critical articles to present his architecture, with Taut's help, Oud began to present lectures in Germany.

As I mentioned earlier, Taut and Oud first shared an interest in Theodor Fischer's architecture and urban planning that they developed in their designs. Although Taut had actually worked in Fischer's office before Oud came there, they would both later seek to realize the concept of integrating the individual building into the urban landscape. In their respective roles as municipal architects, both Taut and Oud attempted to put their theories into practice. Through this process, Oud developed his provisional modernism and Taut followed by seeking to monumentalize and systematize the existing buildings into a larger urban whole.<sup>26</sup>

For Taut, the total structure and its surrounding landscape provided the living space for the inhabitant extending the living space beyond the borders of the housing unit. Using low-cost construction techniques and knowledge of scale and proportion partially developed under Fischer, Taut integrated his units into their surroundings. His appreciation of Dutch efforts in this direction led him to attempt to integrate design

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26. Ernst van der Hoeven, *J.J.P. Oud en Bruno Taut: Ontwerpen voor een nieuwe stad* (Rotterdam: Nederlands Architectuur Instituut, 1994), 12.

elements of housing that he had seen in both Rotterdam and Amsterdam during a trip in 1924.<sup>27</sup> Like Oud, Taut placed the social emancipation of the inhabitants above strict formal concerns and therefore allowed pragmatic realities to influence his final designs.

Taut also shared Oud's belief in the importance of expressing his social and design concerns in print. His early writings (1918–1923) were exalted and fanatical in tone, but in his later writing, he slowly moved towards more theoretically pragmatic solutions. Oud directly benefited from this shift when Taut served as the editor of a short-lived German periodical dedicated to “new constructive thoughts”; *Frühlicht* (1920–1922) was one of the first German journals to publish Oud's writings.<sup>28</sup> Not only did *Frühlicht* provide the first forum in the German language for Oud's “The Future of Modern Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities,” but it had also carried the first article in German on Oud's works, which also praised his built projects and ideas.<sup>29</sup> In this way, Taut's journal functioned as a conduit for, and as a confirmation of, Oud's theories. The publications in *Frühlicht* represented only a small part of the extensive network of avant-garde art and architectural connections that Taut could offer Oud.

Both Taut's prewar membership in several of the previously mentioned arts groups and his transition from expressionist to rationally based architecture provided Taut in the postwar period with a wide network of personal relationships helped him spread his ideas and an understanding of the methods to do this. Taut also continued to expand his network of contacts through his work as the organizer of both the

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27. van der Hoeven, 32. Also see Bletter, 115.

28. Franco Raggi, “‘Frühlicht’ La rete delle riviste,” *Rassegna* 2, no. 12 (1982): 44–90. Also see Mertins, 119 and Rosemarie Haag Bletter, “Mies and Dark Transparency,” in *Mies in Berlin*, eds., Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll (New York: Harry Abrams, 2001), 353.

29. J.J.P. Oud, “Über die zukünftige Baukunst und ihre architektonischen Möglichkeiten,” *Frühlicht*, no. 4 (1922): 113–18; and Adolf Behne, “Architekten.”

Arbeitsrat für Kunst and the Glass Chain. The members of the latter were mainly dropouts from the former, and members of the Glass Chain provided material for *Frühlicht* through the exchange of their ideas in correspondence.<sup>30</sup> This correspondence also allowed Taut to develop others' expectations for Oud's architecture.<sup>31</sup>

Taut used many of these connections to organize a series of lectures for Oud in Germany in 1923 to answer these expectations. (Appendix A) This series followed the publication of Oud's work in *Frühlicht*, and the lectures were held in major cities where Taut had contacts: in Berlin, where Taut was soon to become the head of housing; in Weimar, the home of the Gropius led Bauhaus; and in Magdeburg, Taut's home city. A letter to Oud written shortly before the speaking tour showed how intimately Taut was involved in the planning: he wrote that he was attempting to schedule Oud's talk in Magdeburg, and added that he would preview the talk in Berlin.<sup>32</sup>

Taut also supported Oud by providing him with important feedback following his talks. On 10 April 1923, Taut wrote to Oud praising his talk and enclosing a number of reviews from German newspapers.<sup>33</sup> In this way, Taut helped Oud to gauge his reception and to better understand the expectations of the architects and critics. Taut's words of gratitude for Oud's lectures are followed by the comment ". . .and [I] believe that you really have had a profound effect." More than support for Oud's ideas, this

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30. Karin Kirsch states that Oud was a member of the Novembergruppe. Many of the Novembergruppe also belonged to the AFK. There are letters from the Novembergruppe in the Oud Archive, but his membership in the group remains a question. Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 15.

31. Whyte, 174.

32. Bruno Taut to J.J.P. Oud, 7 March 1923, File 10, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

33. It is also interesting to note that Taut included an article by Behne on American architecture along with six reviews of Oud's lecture from local papers. Bruno Taut to J.J.P. Oud, 10 April 1923, File 11, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

statement revealed Taut's desire that German modernists realized how Oud's ideas were not overly rational. This comment demonstrates Taut's hope that recognition of Oud's theories and architecture would support Taut's belief that architecture should respond to social concerns even when introducing more rational construction principles. Taut's investment in Oud also allowed Taut to reposition himself in the continuing debate on the role of rational architecture. Like Oud, Taut was now a rational planner serving social needs and no longer promoted expressionist architecture. Likewise, a steady stream of articles by and about Oud helped to define Oud's position within the movement.<sup>34</sup> Each contact helped to expand Oud's network and gave him further opportunities to define his provisional modernisms in the German modernist movement, even with individuals new to the movement, such as Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.

Oud met Moholy-Nagy in 1921 through the "Kallenbach House" design competition in Berlin. Moholy-Nagy served as the artistic and architectural advisor to Mr. Kallenbach, and he recommended Walter Gropius, Adolf Meyer, Ludwig Hilberseimer, and Oud as participants in the competition. Moholy-Nagy was probably also familiar with Oud's work in *De Stijl*, in which he also published an article in the first year of the competition.<sup>35</sup>

Oud's design was never constructed because of a loss of interest by the Kallenbachs. However, the competition produced a close friendship between Oud and Moholy-Nagy—a friendship that was based on their mutual interest in applying artistic

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34. For examples of German articles on Oud not previously mentioned see Ernst Stockmeyer, "Monumentale Miethaus-Architektur in Holland," *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* 80 (1922): 257–59; Ludwig Hilberseimer, "J.J.P. Ouds Wohnungsbauten," *Das Kunstblatt* (October 1923): 289–93; Mart Stam, "Holland und die Baukunst unsere Zeit," *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* 82 (1923): 225–29; P. Meyer, "Die Entwicklung der Moderne Baukunst in Holland: Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft," *Schweizerische Bauzeitung* 83 (1924): 134–37.

35. Bletter, 30.

ideas to rational construction. Moholy-Nagy sought a new spatial environment that began in architectonic painting and resulted in architecture.<sup>36</sup> Even though Moholy-Nagy's work still was informed by disembodied expressionist utopias, Oud's architecture represented an example of where artistic vision and design practically merged. In 1921, Moholy-Nagy helped to write the "Manifesto of Elemental Art," which was published in *De Stijl* and outlined the possibilities for the merging of art and rationalism in design:

We consider this manifesto an act. Permeated by the dynamism of our era, we proclaim through elemental art the innovativeness of our attitude, of our conscience by the sources of power constantly intersecting and constituting the spirit and the form of an epoch; these sources create art as something pure, liberated from utility and beauty, as something elementary within the individual.<sup>37</sup>

Like Behne and Taut, Moholy-Nagy expected the dynamism to appear in Oud's product despite Oud arguing for it to be contained as much in the process as in the final form.

Although Moholy-Nagy, like Oud, was an outsider in the German modernist movement, he played a very different role in the movement than Oud. As the German correspondent for the progressive Hungarian artistic journal *MA* (1916–1925), Moholy-Nagy was familiar with the spectrum of art and architectural ideas circulating in Germany expressed in the rapid industrialization of the big city. He had taken up residence in Berlin in 1920, and he used his many Eastern European connections to engage with prominent German modernists and to develop relationships like the one he

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36. Mertins, *Mies in Berlin*, 109.

37. Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 286.

shared with Kallenbach.<sup>38</sup> Rather than introducing ideas from outside the German modernist movement into the debates, or being seen as a representative of a national movement—like Oud—Moholy-Nagy engaged in debates about the role and definition of German modernism. His voice in these debates grew even more when he was appointed to the faculty at the Bauhaus in April 1923.

It was probably because he was familiar with the spectrum of avant-garde ideas that Moholy-Nagy received the appointment. At the Bauhaus, he began publishing a series of books describing these ideas, including the publication of several of Oud's writings. As editor of the Bauhausbücher, he planned to publish a series of thirty books describing all aspects of the modernist movement; the last book in the series was to be entitled *Utopia*.<sup>39</sup> He successfully published fourteen of these books. Oud's *Holländische Architektur* (1926) was the tenth book in the series; it joined such works as Van Doesburg's *Principles of the New Art* (1925) and Gropius's *International Architecture* (1925).<sup>40</sup> These essays in *Holländische Architektur* polemicized and historicized Oud's work, and compared it with that of other international architects.

Not only did the other books in the series “frame” Oud's publication, but they also played an important role at the Bauhaus in developing expectations for Oud's architecture. They represented an internationalization of many of the ideas being

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38. Ibid., 21.

39. Ibid., 43, 392–94.

40. Of the fifty titles planned, the fourteen that were published included: Walter Gropius, *Internationale Architektur*, 1925; Paul Klee, *Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch*, 1925; Adolf Meyer, *Ein Versuchshaus des Bauhaus in Weimar*, 1925; Oskar Schlemmer, *Die Bühne im Bauhaus*, 1925; Piet Mondrian, *Neue Gestaltung, Neoplastizismus, nieuwe beelding*, 1925; Theo Van Doesburg, *Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden*, 1925; Walter Gropius, *Neue Arbeiten der Bauhauswerkstätten*, 1925; L. Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, 1925; Wassily Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche, Beitrag zue Analyse der malerischen Elemente*, 1926; J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*, 1926; Kasimir Malewitsch, *Die gegenstandlose Welt, Begründung und Erklärung des russischen Supermatismus*, 1927; Walter Gropius,



fostered at the Bauhaus, and at the same time, they revealed important differences between the concepts of the Bauhaus and those from outside. Presentation proved as important as content in these books. Moholy-Nagy combined typography, pictures, and text into a cohesive whole that represented the spirit of the written words in image. This ability would not be lost on Oud when he helped choose Moholy-Nagy to design the journal *i10*, where they joined efforts to promote a responsive modernism.

These three figures—Behne, Taut, and Moholy-Nagy—constituted a group of influential individuals who argued for the value of Oud's architecture to the German modern architectural movement by receiving him as an international leader, a shrewd practitioner, and an architect unwilling to relinquish artistic expression to rationalism. Despite highlighting Oud's work, their emphasis on his production rather than his process would remain a troubling legacy for Oud's reception by the first of several German modernist institutions, the Bauhaus.

### ***The Bauhaus Exhibition: Meeting Expectations***

The possibilities of transformation from expressionist fervor to rational design without the loss of artistic expression or social concern that Behne, Taut, and Moholy-Nagy recognized in Oud's architecture, also served as the means of reception at the Bauhaus. The similarities of reception occurred because the Bauhaus, and specifically its leader, Walter Gropius, realized that Oud's architecture offered an avenue for a similar shift from the school's expressionistic roots to rational production—something Gropius began to advocate in 1922. The ability to synthesize Oud's architecture

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*Bauhausbauten Dessau*, 1930; Albert Gleizes, *Kubismus*, 1928; Laszlo Mohloy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur*, 1929.

revealed itself most clearly when the Bauhaus presented its first major exhibition, the Bauhaus Exhibition, in Weimar in 1923 that reflected on its founding principles and signaled a shift in its future aspirations.

Oud's works were featured along with other international architects whose projects and design theories were sympathetic to the desired transformation of the Bauhaus.<sup>41</sup> Among these architects, Oud held a special position since he had become a prominent figure in German debates. In combination with the recognition of his successfully constructed designs, these qualities, among others, encouraged the Bauhaus to exhibit Oud's works and to allow him to deliver the only lecture during Bauhaus Week by a speaker who was not a member of the Bauhaus—his signature “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past Present and Future.” This lecture let Oud bring his message of a provisional modernism directly to German modernist architects offering him a chance to overcome prior emphasis on his results rather than his process. Despite this direct contact, his theory relied on its application to practice, something not many of the German architects had experienced. This lack of modernist construction experience was particularly evident when Oud's designs appeared next to the basic Bauhaus efforts in the exhibition. Again, the product rather than the fusion of theory and practice became the focus of the Bauhaus.

Following the exhibition, Gropius wrote to Oud expressing his gratitude for his participation and commenting on the popularity of Oud's ideas at the Bauhaus:

“Besides, I must point out to you that you triumphed all along the line here. Everyone

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41. Although the Bauhaus had no department of architecture at this time, Gropius believed that all the arts would resolve themselves in architecture—an idea founded in the expressionistic notion of the “cathedral for the arts.”

speaks of you with particular love and respect.”<sup>42</sup> The text of this letter appears very similar to one that Gropius writes to Mies van der Rohe about the exhibition: “I have wanted to keep to a very specific line at this exhibition. . . It has been my definite intention not to show the other discernible trend in today’s architecture—Finsterlin, Scharoun, Häring. . . but only to present this particular cubo-dynamical kind of architecture which is based on construction.” Although Gropius would repeat these claims for a specific architecture in his *International Architecture*, he did not reveal the logical link between forms and construction—the link that produced provisional modernism for Oud. Oud’s presence and words appeared to challenge Gropius’s thinking especially when the aftermath of the exhibition is taken into account.

Furthermore, in comparison to Theo van Doesburg, who saw the weaknesses in Gropius’s understanding and attempted to undermine it by teaching Bauhaus students in separate courses in Weimar, Oud appeared as a less confrontational Dutch modernist.<sup>43</sup> Although Van Doesburg is generally considered to be the primary Dutch influence on the Bauhaus, his importance with regard to Oud, lies more in the fact that he informed Oud about activities at the Bauhaus and appeared dogmatic rather than sympathetic. In contrast, Oud attempted to frame the reception of his architecture and ideas through involvement in the activities that led to the exhibition and the exhibition itself, and in continuing to clarify his position of provisionality in the wake of the exhibition.

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42. “Im übrigen muss ich Ihnen gestehen, dass Sie hier auf der gazon Linie gesigt haben. Alle sprechen von Ihnen mit besonderer Liebe and Achtung.” Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 15 October 1923, File 14, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

43. The author notes that many of Van Doesburg’s designs were based on earlier projects by Oud! Sjarel Ex, “De blik naar het oosten: De Stijl in Duistland en Oost-Europa,” in *De vervolgjaren van De Stijl, 1922–1932*, ed., Carel Blotkamp (Amsterdam: L.J. Veen, 1996), 90.

As I explained earlier in this chapter, Oud first came into contact with members of the Bauhaus through the competition for the design of the “Kallenbach House.” While I have described Moholy-Nagy’s role in promoting and disseminating Oud’s theory, Oud’s relationships with Adolf Meyer—and more importantly, with Gropius—need further examination. Not only did these relationships develop Gropius’s expectations for Oud’s participation and lecture during Bauhaus Week, a week of lectures and events centered on the exhibition, but they also led him to seek Oud’s advice on which international architects to include in the exhibition.

Oud also benefited by presenting his ideas to a group of practicing architects and artists in Berlin in one of the several lectures that Taut helped organize in the months before his talk in Weimar. In that talk, “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past Present and Future,” Oud continued to present his thoughts already available in publications while “framing” them historically. By appealing to an audience comprised almost wholly of figures interested in the progress of modern art and architecture, Oud shaped the expectation of his architecture for the Bauhaus. Furthermore, by ending the talk with reference to several buildings in Germany, the presentation of tangible results from Holland suggested that the ideas being discussed in Germany had international implications.

### ***Oud as an Alternative to Van Doesburg***

When Oud arrived in Weimar for the Bauhaus Exhibition, he had already sent a draft of his essay “The Future of Architecture and Its Architectural Possibilities” to Adolf Meyer, a member of the Bauhaus and a partner to Gropius, whom Oud had originally

met through the Kallenberg design competition. Oud probably realized that Meyer was inclined to be sympathetic towards his ideas since one of Meyer's teachers in Dusseldorf—J.L.M. Lauweriks—had also taught Oud. In addition, Meyer was deeply interested in Berlage's work (he had corresponded with Berlage at length), and he had also played an influential role in bringing Van Doesburg to Weimar in 1921.<sup>44</sup> Although Oud delivered his historical account of Dutch architecture, rather than his more polemical essay at Bauhaus Week, Meyer offered valuable advice about how Oud's ideas might be received in their eventual publication in *Frühlicht*. Also, Meyer and Oud's exchanges probably enabled Gropius to learn more about Oud's philosophy and convince him that Oud's theory was similar enough to invite him to Bauhaus Week.

Meyer responded to Oud in a series of letters dated April and May 1922. In one of these letters, Meyer questioned whether current architecture could be "pure architecture," given that it was influenced by "painterly" ideas of the past. He argued that an adoption of the artistic values in rational designs could be achieved more readily by not appearing on the defensive, but advocating strongly for one's beliefs:

My personal opinion is that your essay would be more comprehensive and more valuable if a positive tone was carried through. The critique of the inadequacies of modern architecture should therefore, of course, not be abandoned. The word, "painterly art" seems to me quite safe.<sup>45</sup>

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44. Annemarie Jaeggi, *Adolf Meyer: Der zweite Mann: ein Architekt im Schatten von Walter Gropius* (Berlin: Argon, 1994), 30, 39.

45. Adolf Meyer to J.J.P. Oud, 17 May 1922, File 7, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

In many ways, Meyer's advice revealed more about German concerns for any reference to expressionist ideas than it did about the content of Oud's essay.<sup>46</sup> The need to emphasize the rational aspects of architecture over the expressionistic preoccupied Meyer. In this instance, where Meyer's expectations met Oud's words, they shared the concept of discounting forms derived chiefly from the spiritual. But Meyer's focus predominantly on discounting the expressionistic tendencies also blocked him from realizing Oud's larger and more important point about the need for a continually responsive modernism.

While Oud strengthened his contacts with members of the Bauhaus such as Meyer and Moholy-Nagy, Van Doesburg traveled to Weimar with the intention of transforming the school. He intended to promote his own conception of the fusion of art and architecture. After an initial visit in 1920, Van Doesburg moved to Weimar in 1921 in the hope of teaching at the Bauhaus. Writing to Anthony Kok, a *De Stijl* contributor, in January 1921, Van Doesburg stated that he had already "turned everything upside down," and that "our views will achieve victory over anyone and anything."<sup>47</sup> Many of the masters at the Bauhaus—and especially Gropius—feared Van Doesburg's power of persuasion and the school refused to give him a teaching position.<sup>48</sup> Feininger may have captured the feeling of the masters most succinctly when he stated, "He [Van Doesburg] would probably be unable, however, to keep himself within bounds and would soon, like Itten. . . want to take over everything."

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46. Adolf Meyer to J.J.P. Oud, 20 April 1922 and 17 May 1922, File 7, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

47. Gillian Naylor, *The Bauhaus Reassessed: Sources and Design Theory* (London: Herbert Press, 1985), 95.

48. Van Doesburg's difficulties in being accepted by the Bauhaus arose partially because Adolf Meyer, rather than Gropius, had been the catalyst for van Doesburg's coming to Weimar. Van Doesburg also did not help his cause when he called Gropius and Meyer "talentless snobs" in an article published in

Denied a teaching position at the Bauhaus, Van Doesburg began to teach classes for Bauhaus students in Weimar outside of the framework of the school.<sup>49</sup>

The masters' initial fear changed to outright dislike, as Van Doesburg delivered damaging lectures, wrote critical texts (especially a scathing review of an exhibition by the students and masters that was held in 1922) and continued to teach classes outside the curriculum.<sup>50</sup> (Figures 14 & 15) Van Doesburg held these classes until the end of 1922; the course work consisted of creating objects shaped by color, light, and space. Even though his classes produced some projects that were published under the title "Studies in Plastic Architecture," the students did not fully embrace Van Doesburg's neoplastic concepts.<sup>51</sup> Instead of investigating new plastic combinations, the students used Van Doesburg's teachings to create more economical and lightweight designs—a telling example of an outsider's philosophy restated in a German context.<sup>52</sup> While it may never be known how much influence he exerted over the Bauhaus, Van Doesburg's superior attitude towards its members and his desire to ingratiate himself, as well as his theories, into the German movement form a striking contrast to Oud's ideas about rational planning. By assuming a self-constructed position of power in the German movement, Van Doesburg not only limited the influence of his own ideas, but indirectly focused attention on Oud's growing prominence as a Dutch and international alternative.

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*Bouwkundig Weekblad* in February 1923. Theo van Doesburg, "De invloed van de Stijlbeweging in Duitsland," *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 44, (1923): 80–84.

49. Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984): 116–17.

50. The contributors to *De Vervolgjaren van De Stijl* does a very good job tracing Van Doesburg's associations with the Bauhaus, especially the antagonistic aspects of the relationship. See especially 72–73, 76, 94, 107.

51. Ex, 90.

52. Kenneth Frampton, "Neoplasticism and Architecture: Formation and Transformation" in *De Stijl: 1917-1931, Visions of Utopia*, ed., Mildred Friedman (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1982), 107.

Oud tracked the Bauhaus's reaction to Van Doesburg and discussed his own architectural philosophy in a series of letters to Moholy-Nagy in 1922. In February of that year, Oud wrote to Moholy-Nagy explaining his differences with Van Doesburg and his refusal to continue collaborating with him following their disagreement on the design of the Spangen housing interiors.<sup>53</sup> Moholy-Nagy met Van Doesburg a few months later. He described his impressions to Oud as follows:

Here I have met Theo Van Doesburg. He is a very interesting person. I found him extraordinarily outgoing, if also in many senses dogmatic. I have not spoken to him enough to be able to form a complete opinion. Moreover, I have only seen reproductions of his work. But that he stands in battle with you--one could understand.<sup>54</sup>

This letter revealed both Moholy-Nagy's familiarity with Oud's position and his own suspicion of Van Doesburg's method, if not his ideas. But even though, in a later letter, Moholy-Nagy commented that Van Doesburg's philosophy "did not fully encompass the needs of Holland or modern man," he remained sympathetic enough to his theories to publish Van Doesburg's *Fundamentals for a New Plastic Art* (1925) as a Bauhaus book.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to Oud establishing an appreciation of the role of a foreign artist in Germany, his exchanges with Meyer and Moholy-Nagy gave him a deeper understanding of the probable reception by German modernists of the initial

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53. J.J.P. Oud to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 14 February 1922, File 6, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Also see Hans Esser, "J.J.P. Oud" in *De Stijl: The Formative Years*, ed., Carel Blotkamp (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 144–46.

54. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to J.J.P. Oud, 9 May 1922, File 7, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.



presentation of his lecture “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present and Future,” which was held at the Society for German Arts and Crafts in Berlin on the evening of 21 March 1923.<sup>56</sup> Oud’s talk—the same one that he would deliver later that year in Weimar—presented his theoretical concerns in the larger context of the progression of international architecture. Even though Oud delivered his lecture to a much more limited audience than the one in Weimar, he generated a following in the press and expanded his number of personal correspondents in advance of his lecture at Bauhaus Week.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Gropius, Oud, and the Bauhaus Exhibition***

Several months after Oud’s lecture in Berlin, Gropius wrote to Oud describing his vision of the Bauhaus Exhibition, asking for Oud’s participation, and requesting Oud’s opinion as to which other international architects should be asked to participate.<sup>58</sup>

Following some introductory remarks, Gropius laid out his plans for the exhibition and Oud’s roles:

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55. “I reject many of the things (those of Mondrian) in De Stijl and in Doesburg, for the present Holland—in its political and economic state—is not totally encompassed in Doesburg’s ability.” Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to J.J.P. Oud, 17 August, 1922, File 8, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

56. The venue for his talk emphasized Oud’s interest in arts and crafts, and letters from members of this school express interest in Oud’s work because he had collaborated with Van Doesburg, and also because he had introduced stained glass and tile work on several of his early projects. The venue itself may have made Oud interesting to the Bauhaus, for the delivery of such a talk in such a venue assumes that the role of architecture is ultimately one of organizing the other crafts. In addition, Ludwig Hilberseimer, one of the ‘Kallenberg House’ competitors, was a leader of this group.

57. Figures such as Knud Lönberg-Holm, a Danish architect who had learned of Oud’s work from Moholy-Nagy, and Hans de Fries of the influential Wasmuth Press were among the crowd in Berlin. Hans De Fries to J.J.P. Oud, 16 March 1923, File 11, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Knud Lönberg-Holm to J.J.P. Oud, January 1923, File 11, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Bruno Taut to J.J.P. Oud, 21 March 1923, File 11, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to J.J.P. Oud, 14 January 1923; File 11, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

58. The tone of the letter suggests that Gropius and Oud had corresponded before, as Gropius begins by thanking him for his letter. Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 31 May 1923, File 11, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

Now to the exhibition material. I want to be able to orient myself with you about the names that you agreed to suggest. I would like to avoid the possibility of the romantic element in this exhibition and the total intended goal to be to exhibit a functionally dynamic architecture.<sup>59</sup>

These words encouraged Oud for two reasons. First, they echoed his own sentiments about the dynamic nature of modern architecture. Second, they showed that Gropius intended not only to allow Oud to make suggestions concerning the nature of the exhibition, but also to let Oud shape his own presentation in relation to the other foreign architects who were—or were not—to be included in the exhibition. By helping select the architects that would accompany him in the exhibition of international architecture, Oud reinforced the concepts presented in his lecture during the opening week of the exhibition, Bauhaus Week.

In a sense, Oud's position had evolved since Taut's and Behne's early efforts to promote his architecture. At that time, Oud's architecture had been largely unknown to the German modernist movement. Now his architecture not only represented an example for the Bauhaus and its followers to emulate, but he had some control over its presentation. This "framing" included helping select several Dutch architects whose work Gropius proposed to be exhibited and helping provided information on international architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, whose work Oud believed shared affinities with his designs. In this way, Oud offered three layers of influence: his architecture provided a built example, his lecture explained his provisional design process, and his information on other international architects contextualized his own

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59. Ibid.

designs. Finally, Oud's offer to provide information stood in stark contrast to Van Doesburg, who Gropius referred to in the closing paragraph of this letter: "The virulent campaign of Van Doesburg against me definitely does not have a very fair background," he wrote, "Someday, I want you to explain it."<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, Van Doesburg was worrying about his diminishing influence at the Bauhaus. He was not invited to join the Bauhaus Exhibition. He recounted his annoyance in a letter to Gerrit Rietveld, a fellow member of De Stijl, just before the exhibition opened:

I remain stunned to learn of your participation in the Bauhaus exposition in Weimar, because, of the way, you act *against* De Stijl. The participation of Wils and Oud does not greatly surprise me; they perpetually search to make some publicity. . . Do you know as well the pedigree of the other persons invited by Oud? Van Anrooy, Dudok, Van Loghem, Rademaker, etc! Some poor examples! Oud himself will give a lecture on the development of modern architecture in Holland. The same as in Berlin: he speaks against De Stijl. The fact that an individual who gave a contribution so insignificant to our powerful tendencies enjoys an audience and hazards judgments against us is really very sad.<sup>61</sup>

Not only did this letter reveal Van Doesburg's acknowledgment of Oud as an alternative to his ideas, but also Oud's "publicity" presented an architectural theory with pragmatic parameters rather than one, which Van Doesburg advocated, driven solely by theoretical ideas.

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60. Ibid.

61. Theo van Doesburg to Gerrit Rietveld, 10 August 1923, quoted in *The Work of G. Rietveld Architect*, T. Brown (Utrecht: Bruna & Zoon, 1958).

In addition to external attempts, like Van Doesburg's, to influence the Bauhaus, Gropius faced internal challenges to his vision for the Bauhaus that the example of Oud's theory and designs could help combat. For instance, Johannes Itten, whose medieval mysticism and emphasis on objects made from wood and textiles as prototypes of industrial production for a German economy waiting for better times, seemed to Gropius to look into the past rather than the future.<sup>62</sup> In an address that he delivered to the Bauhaus in 1922, Gropius captured his plan for the future of the school—a plan for which the Bauhaus Exhibition would serve as a springboard:

Recently, Master Itten demanded from us a decision either to produce individual pieces of work in complete contrast to the economically oriented outside world or to seek contact with industry. It is here, in this method of formulating the question, which I believe that the big unknown that needs to be solved is hidden. Let me at once clarify this: I seek unity in the *fusion*, not in the separation, of these ways of life. . .

Students who have gone through the Bauhaus will be in a position, with the knowledge they have acquired there, to exert a decisive influence on existing craft [enterprise] and industrial works, if they will just decide to join these and exert their influence from within.

The big transformation from analytic to synthetic work is proceeding in all areas, and industry will follow suit. It will seek people with the kind of thorough training that we in the Bauhaus try to give, and these people will free the machine from its [lack of creative spirit]!<sup>63</sup>

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62. Herbert Bayer, Walter and Ise Gropius, *Bauhaus, 1919-1928* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 40. Gropius makes this argument time and time again, and even sticks to it in his book of 1938. But Hochman notes in her book as do other authors that, "Most of the objects were bulbously curved and harshly angled, more revealing of Expressionistic angst than the stark geometric simplicities of machine technology." Elaine Hochman, *Bauhaus: Crucible of Modernism* (New York: Fromm International, 1997), 160. Also noted in Diether Schmidt, *Bauhaus* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1966), 24.

63. Hans Wingler, *The Bauhaus* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1976), 51–2. A letter from Lyonel Feininger to his wife from August 1, 1923 also captures the opposite side of this argument, "With absolute conviction, I reject the slogan 'Art and Technology-A new Unity'—this misrepresentation of art is, however,

Oud's architecture held this fusion of the machine and its creative spirit. Oud's presence and his speech, in combination with the other activities of the Bauhaus Week, would serve, in Gropius's eyes, to legitimize his position for the union of design and the machine in built form.

The importance of Oud's leadership with respect to the international aspect of the exhibition can be seen in the growth in Oud's involvement as the opening of the exhibition approached. Gropius sought Oud's opinions and help with a wide range of issues including: the sequencing of the events during the Bauhaus Week, the possible inclusion of additional Dutch architects, and the soliciting of more information on, and images of, the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the economic obstacles and the sheer magnitude of the planning, Bauhaus Week and the exhibition began on August 15, 1923. (Figure 16) Oud delivered his lecture the day after Gropius delivered a talk entitled, "Art and Technology: A New Unity"—the same slogan under which the model houses designed by the Bauhaus were exhibited. Oud's speech, "The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: The Past, Present and Future," combined words with images of Dutch buildings, concluding with several international buildings, to argue for the concept of a shared endeavor. These images included one of the Theater in Jena that Gropius and Meyer had designed in 1922. Oud's skillful negotiation of the history of Dutch architecture created

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a symptom of our times. And the demand for linking it with technology is absurd from every point of view. A genuine technologist will quite correctly refuse to enter into artistic questions; and on the other hand, the greatest technical perfection can never replace the divine spark of art." See Wingler, 69.

64. Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 9 June 1923, File 12, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 19 June 1923, File 12, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 23 June 1923, File 12, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 4 July 1923, File 12, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; and Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 17 July 1923, File 12, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

a narrative that seamlessly illustrated precedents for his architecture, while at the same time it revealed the visionary nature of his own work. In Oud's opinion, art tempered by necessity produced a rational design that best served modern society. The provisional quality of his message stood in contrast to the dictums of modernists like Van Doesburg, and more importantly to Gropius, to the expressionist tendencies still witnessed in the works of Itten.

Only 15,000 people visited the Bauhaus Exhibition, but the ever-growing number of modern architectural journals—as well as the general press—spread news of the exhibition well beyond this limited audience.<sup>65</sup> The architectural displays received critical praise in the national press and in socialistic, and even some conservative, papers.<sup>66</sup> Adolf Behne in his familiar role as both a member and a critic of the modernist movement, contrasted the intentions behind Oud's tightly designed architecture exhibited in the international section to that of the "House am Horn," Adolf Meyer's house design which was presented as a prototype for modern housing. (Figure 17) He wrote that the Bauhaus effort "flirts with the machine, but it is all art, and a debasement of art--pseudo-constructivist."<sup>67</sup> Behne, who seemed to understand the provisional intentions of Oud's architecture, revealed the inability of the Bauhaus to fully comprehend Oud's message due to its lack of actually constructing modern designs.

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65. "...The exhibition of 1923 was attended by representatives of most of the major newspapers and periodicals of the country. The exhibits, particularly the crafts and architectural displays, enjoyed great critical success in the national press. . . But reactions of the Turingian observers were predominately unfavorable." Lane, 76.

66. Lane, 76. The *Stuttgarter Neues Tageblatt* praised the "exceptional formal elegance" of the buildings, and even the conservative *Neue Preussische Kreuz-Zeitung* wrote enthusiastically about the "new spirit of progress which is being combined with the great past traditions of Weimar." See further comments in Lane, note 32, 240.

67. Adolf Meyer had acknowledge this very fact in a report on the house when he noted that despite its modern methods of construction the house still required four months to construct. Also, other critics

Other articles on the exhibition also singled out the distinction between Oud's theory as applied to building and the Bauhaus's struggle to achieve the same synthesis. One report went so far as to say that Oud's talk emphasized how much more advanced Holland was than Germany in the pursuit of modern architecture.<sup>68</sup> Although Oud's architecture contributed to the tone of the exhibition that one article commented was "an energetic attempt. . . to recognize our future cultural life," his vision of the future grounded in practice as much as theory seemed to have been lost to the efforts of the Bauhaus to insure a move to a rational path from its expressionist beginnings.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the critical focus on the superiority of Oud and Dutch design in comparison to that of the Bauhaus, at least one architect focused on Oud's theory in practice. Eric Mendelsohn, who became a frequent correspondent with Oud, wrote his wife following Oud's lecture and presented a reception of the lecture similar to many in the press:

Amsterdam is betraying the faith: it abandons the new discoveries in favor of overdrawn, emotional, romantic irrelevancies and loses itself in variegated modern trifles. Only what is simple can be understood collectively: what is individualistic remains, in the last analysis, meaningless. Here is where I seem to detect an understandable tactical error on the part of Oud. Oud is, to borrow Gropius' language, functional. Amsterdam is dynamic.

A union of both concepts is conceivable, but cannot be discerned in Holland. The first puts reason foremost—perception through analysis. The second, unreason—perception

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pointed out that the house could have been constructed by traditional methods in its current form. Naylor, 117 and Wingler, 66.

68. Howard Dearstyne, *Inside the Bauhaus* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 76.

69. Wingler, 67.

through vision. Analytical Rotterdam rejects vision. Visionary Amsterdam does not understand analytic objectivity.<sup>70</sup>

If Mendelsohn had ended his analysis here, his ideas might reflect the general categorization of Oud's architecture and its direct association with the Bauhaus. But Mendelsohn continued to attempt to understand Oud's ideas and revealed his difficulty in grasping the provisionality of Oud's efforts in a letter to Oud that soon followed the exhibition:

I am in full agreement with you, if you want to examine the synthesis of the dynamic function in respect to the essential meaning of the concept of "dynamics." But it is particularly in your division of dynamics and vitality and dynamics and movement that the difference between us arises. Like you, I reject "dynamics," if you regard this as a mechanical operation that is, literally as movement. For it oversteps the boundaries of architectonic creativity (I deliberately leave out parallels with the other arts), which always result in a fixed state—never in a process. The mixing of such heterogeneous concepts is dilettante, for it confounds the elements, instead of mastering them.<sup>71</sup>

Mendelsohn, like other commentators, expressed a concern with the final product rather than the process that led to a design. The forces that Mendelsohn sought to express lay in the materials, whereas Oud believed the form came from a confrontation of his theory with material requirements.

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70. Eric Mendelsohn to Louise Mendelsohn, 14 August 1923, reprinted in *Eric Mendelsohn: Letters of an Architect*, ed. Oskar Beyer (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1967), 59–60.

71. Eric Mendelsohn to J.J.P. Oud, 16 November 1923, reprinted in *Eric Mendelsohn: Letters of an Architect*, ed. Oskar Beyer (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1967), 61–62.



The exhibition went beyond just attracting the attention of architects like Mendelsohn and the modernist press, as it became a topic covered by the general press. By attracting the attention of the larger press, the Bauhaus pushed itself and the architects who participated in the exhibition outside the confines of the modernist movement and into the consciousness of the general public. That public reacted either with interest or with unfavorable criticism. The criticism usually centered on Gropius's attempts to internationalize the movement; several critics wrote that the exhibition signaled "cultural disintegration."<sup>72</sup> Due to his close association with the exhibition, Oud's architecture became linked to the rational Bauhaus vision for a future architecture and it opened his work for increasing criticism from certain right-wing factions in Germany. In the future, Oud's architecture would confront both the modernist expectations and those of these conservatives.

### ***Post- Exhibition Ramifications for Gropius and Oud***

Although the provisional perspective of Oud's modernism may not have been fully understood by German modernists, his designs and words did create a renewed interest in Dutch architecture. The correspondence between Oud and Gropius following the exhibition suggests that Oud's influence extended far beyond his participation during Bauhaus Week. Some of Gropius's later letters show how his interaction with the international architecture displayed at the exhibition altered Gropius's own thinking:

Taut spoke to me a short time ago about the diversity in Holland and now Mendelsohn has the idea to travel there. It appears thus that possibilities still exist there. I feel it is for

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72. Lane, 76.

my work of great importance to be able to look once over the border inside to another modern architecture circle, in a development, that is not as so inhibited by materials as Germany unfortunately is.<sup>73</sup>

Oud's presence in Weimar had created new expectations for his architecture that extended beyond combating expressionist forms.

The transformation of the expectations for Oud's architecture also extended beyond just Gropius and members of the Bauhaus partially because of the German Werkbund meeting that took place in Weimar during the Bauhaus Week activities. Not only did this concurrence of events bring influential members of the Werkbund to hear Oud's speech, but it gave him immediate credibility and recognition with the group that would begin to organize the Weissenhof Siedlung Exhibition in less than two years.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to this association, the extent of Oud's reception stretched beyond Germany's borders as evidenced by the numerous letters he received from architectural groups in Czechoslovakia, Italy, Hungary, France, and other European countries following the Bauhaus Exhibition, either requesting his opinions or asking him to give lectures.<sup>75</sup> For the moment, Oud held an unusual position in the field of modern German architecture: excluded from the day-to-day debates about the role of architecture in modern living, the expectations for his architecture extended beyond serving as a visible response to expressionism allowing him to reveal the complexity of

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73. Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 5 November 1923, File 14, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Formal aspects of Oud's work could also be seen in designs by Gropius including his Fröbel House of 1924 with its corner construction characteristic of Oud's factory proposal of 1919 and in the design of the Törten Housing Estate of 1926-28.

74. Naylor, 40.

75. Files 13 to 18, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

his provisional position for the first time at the Weissenhof Siedlung where he combined his ideas with building.

### ***Organizing the Weissenhof and the Need for Oud***

Exhibitions played an essential role in the spread of modernist ideas in Germany, since they reached beyond the modern movement and offered concrete examples that the layperson could also understand. It was with this thought in mind that in 1925 the Werkbund began organizing its Weissenhof Siedlung, a complex of various types of housing designed by modern architects within and outside of Germany, which would stand as built examples for an accompanying exhibition of models and designs.<sup>76</sup>

Gustaf Stotz, an avant-garde artist and the originator of the Weissenhof, was determined to secure Oud's participation and traveled to Holland in September 1925 to request that Oud be the first foreign architect to join.<sup>77</sup>

The opportunity that Stotz presented was even more attractive to Oud than his role at the Bauhaus, since the process of building that impacted his provisional theory was an essential component of the Weissenhof. Similar to the Bauhaus exhibition, Stotz also wrote to Oud to ask him to recommend other Dutch and foreign architects to be included in the exhibition of models and photos that would accompany the complex of houses.<sup>78</sup> In this same letter, he proposed a lecture in Stuttgart later in the year.<sup>79</sup>

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76. For more information on the accompanying exhibition of models and designs see Karin Kirsch, *The Weissenhofsiedlung* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 21–24.

77. Richard Pommer and Christian Otto, *Weissenhof 1927 and the Modern Movement in Architecture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991: 23. Karin Kirsch, *Die Weissenhofsiedlung*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1987: 13–14.

78. "I have received word from Oud again suggesting that Corbusier and he be entrusted with a commission, too, even if only a minor one. I, for my part, would honestly welcome the collaboration of these two gentlemen." Gustav Stotz to Hugo Häring, 14 August 1925, Museum Archives, MoMA, quote in

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, a consultant for the exhibition and its architectural organizing force, had by this time also developed an intimate knowledge of Oud's work. As I explained earlier, Mies had probably heard Oud's lecture in Weimar since he too had works in the Exhibition, and he had also participated in the Werkbund meeting.<sup>80</sup> Despite his own involvement in it, Mies criticized the Bauhaus Exhibition because it was dominated by "constructivists formalism."<sup>81</sup> Mies promoted a connection similar to Oud's between the needs of a building and its form rather than a uniformly applied formal language:

The problem of our time is not formal but constructive in nature. I am convinced that when works are formed in an entirely elementary way out of their prerequisite conditions, they will agree with one another by virtue of their very being, even if one work manifests itself in curves and the other not.<sup>82</sup>

Not only did Mies' words seem to support Oud's use of formal devices such as curved walls in his Hoek van Holland, which was under construction at this time, but they also argued for style developing through the design process rather than adhering to a single formal language.

Mies also viewed Oud's architecture as an element in his effort to assert his vision for modern architecture through the Weissenhof Siedlung. Rather than provide a

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"From Obscurity to Maturity: Mies van der Rohe's Breakthrough to Modernism," Wolf Tegethoff in *Mies van der Rohe, Critical Essays*, ed., Franz Schulze (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 67.

79. Pommer and Otto, 45–46. Also see letter Gustaf Stotz to Oud, 24 September 1925, File 25, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

80. Mies also a member of many of the same groups as Taut, Behne and of course Bauhaus member, Moholy-Nagy.

81. Pommer and Otto, 11.

82. *Ibid.*, 12, 186.

survey of various architectural directions and tendencies, which was desired by Werkbund figures such as Hugo Häring and Walter Curt Behrendt, both of whom had helped Mies promote a more progressive vision in the Werkbund. Despite their joint efforts at reform, Mies wanted an emphasis on process rather than form to appear. As he wrote another member of the Werkbund in several letters of 1927, “Do you think that the title “Die Form” [the Werkbund journal] makes too great a claim?”<sup>83</sup> He followed this letter with a more direct statement of his position and one that Oud shared, “I am not addressing myself against form, only against form as goal.”<sup>84</sup> Again, Oud functioned as an international architect whose architecture would be used to help transform the modernist vision of a German institution.

Oud also met another criterion of Mies’ for choosing architects for the exhibition: he was a “personality.” Following his concept to exhibit a specific vision for modernism, Mies looked at the individual ability of each architect, and at how well that architect’s work was known.<sup>85</sup> It certainly helped that many German architects viewed Holland as one of the leaders in new architecture, and that many influential Stuttgart politicians identified Holland with modern architecture.<sup>86</sup> Due to Oud’s previous contacts with German modernism and Mies’ understanding of his process, Oud, was an essential international link to the exhibition—a link that Stotz and Mies both hoped to strengthen.

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83. Mies van der Rohe to Walter Riezler, “Zum neuen Jahrgang,” published in *Die Form* 2 (1927), 1. Also see Werner Oechslin, “‘Not from an aestheticizing, but from a general cultural point of view’ Mies’s Steady Resistance to Formalism and Determinism: A Plea for Value-Criteria in Architecture,” in *Mies in America*, ed., Phyllis Lambert (New York: Harry Abrams, 2001), 68.

84. Mies van der Rohe to Walter Riezler, “Zum neuen Jahrgang,” published in *Die Form* 2 (1927), 2. Also see Oechslin, 68.

85. *Ibid.*, 47–48.

86. *Ibid.*, 48.

### ***Oud's Interest: The Rotterdam Bourse and Building outside of Holland***

While Mies and Stotz were using Oud as an example of a foreign architect held in high esteem within Germany, Oud was using his German connections to try to persuade the selection committee that he deserved the position of architect for the Rotterdam Bourse. Oud had been considered the front-runner for the competition in 1926 to design the Bourse, partly because he was an internationally renowned city architect for Rotterdam, and partly because Berlage, his mentor, sat on the selection committee. Six architects had been invited to participate in the competition. Besides Oud, they included Granpre Molière and Willem Kromhout from Rotterdam and W.M. Dudok, H.F. Martens, and J.F. Staal from outside the city.<sup>87</sup>

The selection committee wanted the building to join the scale of the already established string of large facades formed by the town hall and the post office, but they left the architects to their own devices for the conception of the remaining design issues. Oud attempted to respond to the large site, and to the vague requirements of the competition, with a reinforced-concrete frame building that allowed the interior to be configured in many different ways while integrating the large plaza outside the building into the overall design.<sup>88</sup> (Figure 18) Stunned that Berlage did not understand how his entry and its provisionality provided the essential connection between form and social function and by the choice of J.F. Staal as the winner of the competition, Oud enlisted the help of two of his German supporters, Gropius and Taut, to defend his design.

Both architects wrote letters to Berlage and sent copies of the letters to Oud. Gropius may have mirrored Oud's own viewpoint when he wrote in his cover letter to

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87. Taverne, Wagenaar, de Vletter, 353.

88. Ibid., 357.

Oud that the design and construction of a large modern building would insure that Oud was not “overlooked”:

I wrote a long letter to Berlage and I actually started by setting forth my ideas about the two architectural trends in Holland. And I then linked up with your case. Of course, I have no idea how he will react. Anyway, I believe it is truly necessary that you, with the many essential contributions you make, should succeed with a large building that cannot be ignored.<sup>89</sup>

In a persuasive flourish, Gropius’s letter to Berlage suggested a parallel between Oud’s Bourse and the Amsterdam Bourse that Berlage had designed some twenty years earlier, stating that Oud’s design could open new avenues for Dutch architecture in much the same way as Berlage’s design had done.<sup>90</sup>

Taut followed Gropius’s effort with a long letter to Berlage in which he recounted the impressions of Dutch architecture that he had received on a recent vacation, and attempted to place Oud’s work within this framework:

During my brief stay in Rotterdam I was very pleased to come upon Oud’s clear architectural conception, further developed and matured in his new work. His group of houses at Hoek van Holland already overcomes the theoretical rigidity that is always fated to be the mark of an initial tendency. . . Looking at the flowing, light and, in its kind, wonderful housing project at Hoek van Holland, I am under the impression that Oud will

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89. Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud, 3 May 1927, File 40, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

90. Ibid.; Bruno Taut to J.J.P. Oud with copy of letter to Berlage, 17 May 1927, File 40, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

be able to add a similar touch to the construction of the Exchange, that will surpass the skeleton-type structure.<sup>91</sup>

Making a concession to Berlage's possible objection about this underlying structure, Taut shrewdly attempted to link Oud's design of the Bourse to his highly acclaimed housing, but neither letter persuaded Berlage.

Taut and Gropius received similar replies from Berlage. He told them that Oud's work had been rejected both on formal grounds, and because it could not be integrated into its surroundings. In conclusion, Berlage noted that only a commission—rather than a competition—could produce a single direction for architecture, that, in his opinion, none of the perspectives promoted by current modern architects had achieved this goal.<sup>92</sup> This response captured the spirit of Berlage's effort, made in the last years of his life, to redirect the modern movement away from objectivity and back to its roots, which he felt, remained in art.<sup>93</sup> Although Berlage seemed to be calling for a principled provisional modernism similar to Oud's, Oud interpreted Berlage's desire as a return to an architecture that produced designs that did not adequately balance artistic application and the needs of the inhabitants. In Oud's opinion, Berlage represented just as much a problem as the turn towards pure objectivity that Berlage criticized: only

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91. Bruno Taut to J.J.P. Oud, 17 May 1927.

92. Walter Gropius to J.J.P. Oud including letter from Berlage to Gropius marked "Confidential," 17 June 1927, File 41, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Bruno Taut to J.J.P. Oud including copy of letter from Berlage to Taut, 15 June 1927, File 41, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. The powerlessness of German advocacy may have been foreshadowed in Mies' villa design for the Kröller Müller's in 1911. When the Dutch art critic, H.P. Bremmer, declared that Mies's design was "not art," Mies had Julius Meirer-Graefe, the German art critic, wrote him a letter of support, but to no avail. See Tegethoff, *Mies in Berlin*, 142–144.

93. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 359–60.



Berlagian ideas could be expressed, and attempts to create a responsive modernism would be discounted.<sup>94</sup>

Designing houses for the Weissenhof Siedlung offered Oud a chance to escape the influence of Berlage, as he had already done in his writings, by putting his words into action outside of Holland. While the “Kallenbach House” had presented Oud with the challenge of designing a freestanding single-family home for a wealthy client—a challenge that did not play to his strengths—the Weissenhof Siedlung allowed him to extend his practice of constructing worker housing beyond the borders of Holland. It gave him the freedom to display his command of housing design without needing to reproduce the units in quantity and was now contextualized in the many lectures he had given in Germany. Although cost concerns did restrict his use of certain materials, such as colored brick, the project offered him an unsurpassed opportunity to display the essential quality of his provisional modernism: the interaction between theory and forms through the process of building.<sup>95</sup> Of course, the Weissenhof was not the large Rotterdam Bourse commission that Oud had wanted. But the fact that Oud’s architecture would be associated with the work of other architects in the exhibition, and the fact that the exhibition would attract a large number of visitors and extended press coverage, insured that Oud, in the words of Gropius, would not be “overlooked” in Germany.

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94. Ibid., 361. Oud wrote in 1934 of Berlage’s role: “His principles, abstract and prophetic enough in writing, became in the reality of his feeling and thinking and doing always Berlage-ideas in Berlage-forms. The disadvantage of this was that we, his young disciples, were initially able to believe that we were observing his principles, whereas he had the impression that we were going against him. It was his tragedy, as well as ours.” J.J.P. Oud, “Dr. H.P. Berlage 1856-1934, *de 8 en Opbouw*, no. 18 (1934): 151.

95. Weissenhof to J.J.P. Oud, 14 June 1927, File 41, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Letter comments on Oud’s desire to use tiles. Also see Pommer and Otto, 117.

### ***Oud's Role: Preparing for and Exhibiting in the Weissenhof***

Much of Oud's energy before and during the Weissenhof Exhibition was devoted to disseminating his ideas, which also functioned to promote Mies' goal for the exhibition to reveal the process behind modern design. While the Weissenhof Siedlung focused his design energies, he attempted to spread his philosophical message beyond the confines of the settlement. In much the same way as he prepared for the Bauhaus Exhibition, he prepared for the Weissenhof by delivering a lecture arranged by Stotz in Stuttgart. Stotz devoted a great deal of time to promoting Oud's signature lecture, "The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past, Present, and Future." He hoped that in it Oud would show not only images of his own work, but also images of other significant modern structures in Holland and abroad, to place the works exhibited in the Weissenhof within a broader context.<sup>96</sup> Stotz also encouraged Oud to send him a copy of his latest essay, "Ja und Nein: Bekenntnisse eines Architekten," which Stotz helped have published.<sup>97</sup>

This short essay composed of aphorisms under thematic headings captured the essence of Oud's provisionality in its ability to circumscribe rather than dictate the terms of modern design. Oud began under the heading, "On technology," stating, "I proclaim that artists must put themselves into the machine, but I have become conscious of the fact that the machine must be a servant of art." Oud further described how this introduction of art could lead to a new style in "On the New Style:" "Without reservation I am on the side of modern art out of whose will in time the new style will come; but I

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96. Gustaf Stotz to J.J.P. Oud, 23 October 1925, File 26, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

97. J.J.P. Oud, "Ja und Nein. Bekenntnisse eines Architekten," *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 46 (1925): 431; also published in *Europa Almanach* (Potsdam, 1925), 18–20, *Wasmuth's Monatshefte für Baukunst* 9 (1925): 140–47.

admit that sometimes I equally admire its force with which it breaks with the Old, and its talent with which it builds up the New.”

In many ways art served as a balance to rationalism so it did not evolve in to formalism, and rationalism, likewise, functioned as a balance so only aesthetic choices were made that contributed to production of the idea in form. This balance, for Oud, represented theory constrained by the response to the requirements of the design, as he noted in “On Rationalism:” I learned at school that a rationalist architect is somebody who honors construction, but for me an architect is only a rationalist when he honors the purpose of the building.” Oud’s intention in publishing these ideas was not to reveal an uneasiness about the path for modernism, but rather to offer a modernism that was responsive rather than dogmatic and one that relied on process rather than form. These ideas also served the Werkbund.

Oud repeated this combination of lecture and publication—either independently or in conjunction with an exhibition—in several German cities in the two years preceding the Weissenhof Siedlung. In June 1926, he delivered his talk on “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present, Future,” in Mannheim to accompany an exhibition on modern architecture. Late in the same year, Oud’s Bauhaus book, *Holländische Architektur*, with its three seminal essays, was finally published and served as a prominent subject in correspondence and lectures. Following the publication of this book, Oud delivered “The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past, Present, and Future” in Hannover, followed by an exhibition in Berlin organized by Werner Hegemann of the Wasmuths Press.<sup>98</sup> Each lecture and publication helped to

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98. Some clippings from local Hannover papers in the dated 22 January 1927, File 38, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Particularly interesting is the manner in which articles often cross-reference past endeavors in

refine the expectations of German modernists for Oud's architecture. But Oud's provisional modernism needed the constructive aspect of the Weissenhof if his ideas were going to receive the practical constraints that were essential to his theory.

Due to bureaucratic delays and cost concerns, the final selection of the architects included in the exhibition continued into early 1927, and consequently left very little time for the design and construction of the houses.<sup>99</sup> The sixteen architects who were eventually chosen included several well-known German modernists, such as Bruno Taut, Behrens, Gropius, and Mies, and a selection of international architects, including Oud, Le Corbusier, Joseph Frank, Mart Stam, and Victor Bourgeois.<sup>100</sup> With only several months to prepare the site and the accompanying exhibition and given the fact that the architects lived in many different countries, Mies, more than anyone else involved, realized that the success of the exhibition would depend upon how it was presented in the press as much as on the quality of the buildings, which were poorly constructed.<sup>101</sup>

A month after the exhibition opened; the houses by Oud, Scharoun, Stam, Behrens, and even Mies, stood unfinished. (Figures 19 & 20) Even though this angered many of the visitors, the organizers still believed that the problem could be overcome through positive publicity. Even with positive publicity, this problem surely hampered the understanding of Oud's work since his provisional modernism relied on the

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the field, such as the publication of Oud's Bauhaus book. For more information on the Berlin exhibition see File 41, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

99. Tegethoff in his essay on Mies, notes that due to the controversy about which architects were to be included, Oud, along with Bonatz and Gropius, was consulted about providing alternative plans for the site. Tegethoff, 70.

100. Other German architects included two local architects, Richard Döcker and Adolf Schneck; Adolf Rading and Hans Scharoun from Breslau; and Max Taut and Ludwig Hilberseimer from Berlin. Pommer and Otto, 2.

101. Pommer and Otto, 60.

combination of theory within the constraints of construction. Oud, like other participating architects, had willingly publicized the Weissenhof in the year leading up to its opening with his lecture and publication, but his architecture especially needed the foil of building to give it balance.<sup>102</sup>

### ***Critical Reception: Oud and the Weissenhof***

Although Oud was actively promoting his theories and his works in various lectures and exhibitions as part of Mies' publicity effort, he was unconvinced that attempting to control the press would have a lasting effect in comparison to the open debate of ideas. This opinion revealed another aspect of Oud's provisional modernism since a responsive modernism required the closest connection to current ideas rather than any adherence to formalism, either in form or ideas. Oud's advocacy of this position is most clearly illustrated in an exchange of letters with Eric Mendelsohn that took place in June 1926. In these letters, Oud argued that he did not approve of criticism that only said yes and amen to everything modern—similar to the views in his recently published “Ja und Nein.”<sup>103</sup> At the same time, he felt that the modernist movement was so full of the power of daily living, so “inviolably powerful,” that articles critical of the movement could not halt its progress. Finally, he argued that “work and not the suppression of opinions should be our power”—a concept that he later put into practice when he became an editor of *i10*.<sup>104</sup>

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102. Ibid., 11.

103. In a section titled, “On Propaganda,” Oud wrote, “I recognize that it is necessary to be one-sided when propagating new ideas, but I cannot see the development of a new style without compromising life in all its facets.”

104. J.J.P. Oud to Eric Mendelsohn, 22 June 1926, File 31, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

Mendelsohn responded that the modernist movement depended on the role of the critic much more than Oud believed it did. He wrote that when the architect's work is good, dissenting opinions do not damage the architect, but they could damage the movement in general. Mendelsohn suggested that if a critic (in this case Werner Hegemann of *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst*, who had published an attack on the form and construction techniques of the houses) cannot be "objective and loyal," then modern architects should boycott his journal.<sup>105</sup> In closing he mentioned that Oud might not understand some of the critics' slights to the movement because they were "local and of a purely German nature."<sup>106</sup>

This disagreement highlights a key aspect of Oud's reception in the German movement. Despite his close ties with many German architects, Oud was still regarded as a Dutch architect. As such, he represented part of the "international" movement, rather than functioning as part of the German debate. Oud held a position different from that of many German architects: he had successfully completed several housing projects by this time, while many German architects were still waiting for their first commission. Oud understood the value of the concrete; he knew that the tangible could withstand debate and he understood how it could impact isolated theories.

The completion of the Weissenhof housing, therefore, represented a big step forward for the German modernist movement from theory to practice since the time of Oud's inclusion at the Bauhaus exhibition, though the position of modernist architecture in Germany was not so secure as to allow open debate. The movement wanted to advance rather than reflect, but what Oud wanted to signal was that one could not occur

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105. For more information on the reaction to Hegemann, see Pommer and Otto, 147.

106. Eric Mendelsohn to J.J.P. Oud, 26 June 1926, File 31, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

without the other. The essence of modernism for Oud was to be responsive. In contrast, the Werkbund method called for good publicity—that is, for advertising, promotion, or advocacy in the papers—rather than the publication of conflicting sentiments.

Mies believed that publicity through the press accounts and reviews held the key to the success of the Weissenhof exhibition (film and radio were still in their infancy as sources of news), especially since the exhibition only attracted 500,000—a low number when compared to similar exhibitions of the time.<sup>107</sup> Before the exhibition had begun, Mies had chosen Werner Graff, a seasoned publicist and graphic designer, as someone who could counteract any problems with the construction of the site with a flurry of positive publicity.

Graff developed a dual process for publicizing the exhibition. This process relied on the publication of a catalog for the exhibition, *Bau und Wohnung*, and on the targeting of a limited number of liberal newspapers and journals that were already favorably disposed towards the exhibition. In the catalog, Mies and Graff preceded the presentation of the buildings by the individual architects with a foreword and an explanatory statement. In the foreword, Mies argued that the problem of modern housing should be solved as much with creative talent as by "computational or organizational means." He intended the exhibition to avoid the doctrines of the period, and to make its point by promoting practical building, which appeared to embrace Oud's thinking except by limiting debate.

Mies' short foreword was followed by Graff's explanatory statement. In his very first sentence, Graff proclaimed, "The new architecture is. . .striving to a new living art

based on a connection between new materials and new construction, not just in the will to a new form.” Graff argued that the exhibition presented the viewer with numerous examples of this process and future housing types. For each architect, the format was the same with a schematic drawing of the building, a set of plans, photos of the building under construction, and photos of the finished building.<sup>108</sup> Most of the photographs showed the buildings devoid of any human presence, and the combination of these idealized photos and the use of the same format for each architect’s work gave the catalog a unified feel. To complete the cohesiveness of the publication, each architect provided a brief explanation of his project with his signature to accompany the illustrations.

Interestingly, Oud’s text differed substantially from that of every other architect, for Oud chose only to describe the project, without making any polemical statements. The text revealed Oud’s hope that the building could speak for itself. This approach allowed Oud to emphasize both his command of modern building techniques and its importance to his provisional outlook. He had already devote time to educating Germans about this theoretical positions, now they could merge these ideas with the practical parameters of his building, thus following the same process that Oud did. Also, his description might have shielded him from some of the criticism that the exhibition received in the press (Corbusier’s inflexible sweeping statements received particular attention), but in many ways, Oud’s technical description were subsumed by the larger project. Oud’s housing received many of the general criticisms of the

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107. Pommer and Otto, 60, 215.

108. *Ibid.*, 132–133.



Weissenhof, without the equal recognition that his compliance to the cost parameters given to each architect represented the triumph of his process and his modernist vision.

Although Oud did not voice his theoretical positions in the catalog, he used other journals to continue to promote his provisional approach at the exhibition. Chief among these was the newly established, *i10*, for which Oud was the editor. Five issues of this journal contained articles, photos, and illustrations dedicated to the Weissenhof Siedlung, several of which were written by Oud.<sup>109</sup> Again, Oud illustrated his belief that the written word and the constructed building served different functions. Text represented the field of debate, whereas the constructed building contained a visual argument for the merging of theory and reality in built form. But the effectiveness of the articles in *i10* is questionable; for the articles appeared in Dutch with short synopses in English, French, and German. Also most of the journals readers were members of the avant-garde, who were already familiar with Oud's work. If the articles strengthened his position among these readers, they certainly did not transform his reception in Germany.

While Graff targeted specific newspapers and journals in the general press that were sympathetic to the modernist movement, the professional journals presented a more difficult challenge. Not all of the journals had editors, like Oud, who were sympathetic to the cause of the Weissenhof. Most of the articles that appeared in the architectural journals were not influenced by Graff's opinions. These articles offered a diverse range of opinions, concentrating on the issues of rationalization and form.<sup>110</sup>

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109. J.J.P. Oud, "Huisvrouwen en architecten," *i10*, no. 2 (1927): 44–47. J.J.P. Oud, "Internationale architectuur: Werkbund-tentoonstelling 'Die Wohnung' Juli-September 1927, Stuttgart." J.J.P. Oud, "Toelichting op een woningtype van de *Werkbundaustellung Die Wohnung*, Stuttgart."

110. Pommer and Otto, 138.

*Die Form*, the mouthpiece of the Werkbund, dedicated an entire issue to the Weissenhof, virtually creating a second catalog of the exhibition. Other journals, such as *Kunstwart*, *Bauwelt*, and *Die Weltbühne*—all mainstream professional art and architecture journals sympathetic to the modernist movement—offered generally favorable critiques of the exhibition. Several authors described Oud's housing as "excellent" or as "expressing the organic in the modern movement." But none of them explained Oud's process or why his housing was better than the others.<sup>111</sup>

In fact, much of the interpretation generated by the Weissenhof tended to focus on form, no matter what Mies desired. Walter Curt Behrendt's *Der Sieg des neuen Baustils (The Victory of the Modern Style)* (1927) featured a panorama of the Weissenhof on its cover. Although Behrendt struggled to define the new style as a cohesive movement, he joined the other efforts, such as Gustav Platz's *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit* (1927), to assert the characteristics of a new style. Platz argued that, "We are at the beginning of a development process. . .that will precipitate a new style," and introduced the topic with an extensive text followed by supporting images. Behrendt went even further than this, arguing that once the style did sort itself out, the expressive possibilities were limitless: "It is hard to imagine what a wealth of expression architecture will unfold once it begins to make free use of the elements of the new style that it is now striving to attain."<sup>112</sup> In addition Hilberseimer's book, *Internationale neue Baukunst* (1927), essentially served as a catalog for the accompanying exhibition of models and plans at the Weissenhof and also placed an emphasis on style. These

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111. Rudolf Arnheim, "Die Stuttgarter Werkbundaustellung," *Die Weltbühne* 23, (1927): 639–43; *Die Form* 2, no. 9 (1927): 257–298; Joseph Popp, "Die neue Wohnung," *Kunstwart* 41, 87–94.

112. Lambert, 65.

formal readings of the project gave the Weissenhof a cohesion from which Hitchcock and Johnson in America would build and opened the site for criticism in Germany.

Many critics followed Mies and Graff's lead and praised the development for illustrating "how we live and how we want to live." Others questioned whether the search for the new was proceeding with no thought as to whether the new architecture was also good.<sup>113</sup> *Der Baumeister*, *Bauwelt*, and *Neubau*—trade journals that addressed new concepts in architecture—focused most of their criticisms on the Weissenhof architects' adherence to a unified cubic form at what several authors believed to be the expense of a rational use of space.<sup>114</sup> Rudolf Pfister, writing in *Der Baumeister*, provided one of the most extensive and incisive appraisals; he criticized all aspects of the settlement, from its planning to his ominous statement that the grouping resembled a "Klein-Jerusalem."<sup>115</sup> While Oud was rarely singled out in these attacks, the unified nature of the exhibition left his house open to pointed questions about its functionality, and whether its layout made cleaning easier and promoted the flow of fresh air.<sup>116</sup>

Other groups whose sympathies lay outside the Werkbund also launched critical attacks. The Bund für Heimatschutz, an organization made up of architects who believed in linking the demands of the contemporary world with the past, and one of the first solidified movements against modern design, concentrated its critique on the formal aspects of the project. Led by its chief critic, Paul Schultze-Naumburg, the Bund argued

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113. Pommer and Otto, 140.

114. Rudolf Pfister, "Stuttgarter Werkbundaustellung, Die Wohnung," *Der Baumeister* 26, no. 2 (1928): 33–72; Franz Hoffmann, "Kritisches über die Stuttgarter Werkbundsiedlung," *Bauwelt* 41 (1927): 1020–1021; Willi Fuchs-Röll, "Neues Wohnen," *Neubau* 9, no. 17 (1927): 197–205 and Willi Fuchs Röll, "Erfahrungen aus der Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart," *neubau* 10, no. 14 (1928): 161–163.

115. Rudolf Pfister, 34.

116. Franz Hoffmann, 1020.

that the new cubic, flat-roofed styles were not connected with the fabric of the local landscape. This group also reacted to the supportive press accounts of victory in the decisive battle of styles and lobbied the Stuttgart government to include other architectural styles in the exhibition, arguing if it represented other contemporary tendencies in building could this new style be called dominant.<sup>117</sup> The wealth of critical opinions pro and con about the Weissenhof Siedlung revealed that it had captured the attention of modern German architectural discourse, and ensured that its members—thanks as much to the publicity machine as to their own designs—would always remain associated with the project.

At the same time, the reaction against the exhibition on the part of journals concerned with all types of architecture exposed the solidified status of the modern German architectural movement. Compared with the Bauhaus Exhibition, which had received its negative critiques largely from within the modernist movement, the Weissenhof faced sharp opposition to the concept of the modern from conservative architects. In this way, the opposition outside the modernist movement revealed a much more defined idea of the movement in Germany. In the future, establishing a position in the modern movement would require a participant to respond to those against the movement as much as join the argument for the progress of modern architecture, making a provisional argument like Oud's that much more difficult to construct.

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117. Pommer and Otto, 144.

### ***Aftermath: Interest and Disinterest in Modern German Architecture***

Although Oud's inclusion in the Weissenhof Siedlung served as a measure for his participation in the German modernist movement, the unity that many critics perceived in the exhibition was short-lived. Instead of uniting architectural thinking to solve the problem of modern living that Mies had outlined, the Weissenhof splintered the field of modern architects. Three groups emerged: those who favored a highly rational style of housing—the Zeilenbau architects; those who sought a greater reconciliation with past styles; and those who fell somewhere between these two extremes.<sup>118</sup> The Zeilenbau architects invited Oud to participate in the planned Dammerstock Siedlung in Karlsruhe in 1929, probably because they admired his designs for large block housing in Rotterdam. Oud also received support from critics of the Zeilenbau, such as Bruno Taut, who sought some of Oud's writings for a publication of the same year.

Reception by both of these groups revealed that Oud's provisionality had not been understood as a process, but rather as an inconclusive formal position that was still available to claim as an illustration of a specific concept. Additional clarity about Oud's position would not be forthcoming, as Oud made a conscious decision to concentrate on constructive aspect of his provisionality rather than the theoretical development. His belief in the power of built form—a belief captured in his exchange with Mendelsohn in 1926—and the process that determined its final design, actually undermined his further reception in Germany.

The Dammerstock Siedlung was one of the many exhibitions following the Weissenhof Siedlung that implicitly critiqued the Weissenhof through the presentation of

a single type of modern housing as superior. Although the Wohnung und Werkraum in Breslau (1926), the Siedlung Fischthalgrund in Berlin (1928), and the Austrian Werkbund exhibition in Vienna (1929), all either mimicked the Weissenhof by advocating a certain style of housing or severely critiqued it by advocating a more traditional style, the exhibition in Karlsruhe attempted to capture a single aspect of the Weissenhof—"The Practical Dwelling"—a concept that certainly had resonance for Oud's provisional modernism. By choosing this title for their exhibition, the Zeilenbau architects emphasized the fact that the Dammerstock Siedlung would not include single-family villas of the type seen in the Weissenhof Siedlung.<sup>119</sup>

Although Oud was participating in the competition for the Dammerstock Siedlung, Bruno Taut still sought to promote his architecture in *Die Neue Baukunst in Europa und Amerika*, published in 1929. Taut's role continued to evolve in the field of German modernism. No longer an outright polemicist for expressionism or rational alternatives, Taut veiled his opinions in the guise of a historical viewpoint. Following Oud's essay "The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past, Present, and Future," published three years before, Taut's description of the development of modern architecture in Holland paralleled Oud's previous writing. Berlage stood as the father of Dutch modernist architecture and the Amsterdam School relied on the designs of De Klerk to flourish. Taut further followed Oud's lead when he argued that Oud had provided strong leadership in rational planning for a country emerging from its neutrality during World War I.<sup>120</sup>

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118. Ibid., 148-149.

119. Ibid., 151.

120. Bruno Taut, *Die Neue Baukunst in Europa und Amerika* (Stuttgart: J. Hoffmann, 1979), 42.

While Taut criticized some of Oud's early projects as "gloomy," he focused more directly on Oud's more modern projects, such as Hoek van Holland ("a stunning development of new architectural language"). He also argued that Dutch architecture exerted some influence in Germany, and that at the same time it was part of a worldwide movement towards modern architecture, as seen in the houses of the Weissenhof Siedlung.<sup>121</sup> Taut continued to promote Oud's work, but as a part of the development of the modern movement rather than as a current concern. Without Oud's participation to give the interpretations dynamic meaning, Oud's prominence relied more on his past success than his new ideas.

An exchange of letters with Leo Adler, one of the editors at *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst*, reflected Oud's break from active participation in the German movement. Adler wrote to Oud on November 10, 1927, asking him for a series of sentences describing the examples of his work that had recently been exhibited at the Weissenhof Siedlung. Showing none of his normal enthusiasm for supporting his architecture through writing, Oud responded three days later that his interest in writing polemics had waned, and that he was devoting his energies to design and building—the essential process in his provisional modernism. He added that while he agreed with the concept of promoting one's ideas through writing he would only maintain his correspondence for the time being.<sup>122</sup> This change of heart may also have resulted from Oud's new role as an editor of *i10*, a position that allowed him to shape architectural debates without necessarily putting pen to paper.

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121. Ibid., 44.

122. J.J.P. Oud to Leo Adler, 10 November 1927, File 46, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; J.J.P. Oud to Leo Adler, 13 November 1927, File 46, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

Even though the momentum from the Stuttgart exhibition was felt beyond the borders of Germany, Oud's withdrawal from the personal promotion of his architecture through theoretical writings reveals a retreat on the part of Oud from the modern movement in Germany.<sup>123</sup> A distinct shift had occurred, and the continually evolving nature of Oud's reception in Germany was now threatened because the Germans had become accustomed to a steady production of Oud's ideas and buildings. Oud had maintained, and even increased, the influence of his work in Germany by promoting his ideas through writing while displaying his projects in exhibitions. When he stopped writing, he risked losing his position as the German modernist movement continued to shape itself.

At the same time, centers of power in the modern German architectural world were shifting. Gropius left the Bauhaus in April 1928, putting a lecture by Oud on indefinite hold. The Congress Internationale d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), an organization of modern architects that emphasized standardization and town planning in the search for housing solutions, emerged in the late 1920s, shifting the German movement into a international arena. Oud was only marginally involved with CIAM after turning down an early invitation to join the group.<sup>124</sup> In many ways, Oud's choosing to edit *i10* rather than to continue to write polemics coincided with the first signs of a hardening of forces against the modernist movement.<sup>125</sup> In a sense, the modernist

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123. Some of Oud's work was included in a modernist exhibition in Graz through the support of Sigfried Giedion.

124. Ise Gropius and J.J.P. Oud, 1 March 1928, File 50, Oud J-B, Gabriel Guevrekian to J.J.P. Oud, 18 April 1928, File 51, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; J.J.P. Oud to Gabriel Guevrekian, 24 April 1928, File 51, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Gabriel Guevrekian to J.J.P. Oud, 9 June 1928, File 52, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

125. Adolf Meyer to J.J.P. Oud, Oud Archive, 12 March 1928, File 50, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Meyer noted a growing resistance to the modern movement.



movement in Germany had defined itself so well that critics could choose specific aspects of the movement to attack.

Oud thought that a journal devoted to a wide range of opinions would in some way counteract a simplistic understanding of modernism, but the audience for the journal did not stretch beyond members of the modernist movement. What he may have failed to realize was that German modernism had become defined as much by those reacting against it as by the positions of members, making all nuance, like his provisional modernism, simply “modernist” and therefore misguided. In addition, Oud’s international position—a position that had once enhanced the scope of the movement—now became one of the many issues that conservative architects and politicians used to attack those with whom Oud had been so closely aligned. The difficulties of making an argument for a provisional modernism between two extreme positions would be a challenge that Oud would again face in the postwar period.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Oud's Reception in America and the International Style Exhibition**

The term “International Style” was inextricably linked to J.J.P. Oud’s architecture when he was featured as one of the four “great leaders of modern architecture” in the International Exhibition of Modern Architecture (commonly known as the International Style Exhibition) at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City.<sup>1</sup> Recent scholarship has explored the importance of the International Style Exhibition by analyzing this event as one factor in the relationship of the European “leaders”—with the exception of Oud—to the American modernist movement.<sup>2</sup> This chapter follows a similar method with respect to Oud. In doing so, it fills a void that exists in both Oud scholarship and in that of the International Style Exhibition. Rather than focusing solely on Oud’s direct involvement with the exhibition, which many previous studies on Oud have addressed, this chapter will contextualize this exhibition within larger reception models for European modernism in America of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I will analyze Oud’s initial contacts with the American modernist movement in the 1920s; his varying reception by Hitchcock and Johnson; the way in which a cohesive narrative was formed in which Oud as modern stylist and Oud as a modern practitioner merged; and finally, how Oud was presented in the exhibition, in the exhibition catalog, and in the book that accompanied the exhibition, in comparison to Gropius, Mies, and Le Corbusier—the three other featured international modernists. By

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1. Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, 28.

2. Bacon; Margret Kentgens-Craig; and Phyllis Lambert.

3. For examples see Hans Oud, 95–98; Stamm, 110–117; Langmead, 16–18; and Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 321–31.

analyzing this combination of factors, I intend to show how the International Style Exhibition misunderstood Oud's provisional modernism and created unreasonable expectations for Oud's architecture—expectations that would determine his postwar reception. This effect forms the substance of the fourth chapter.

### ***The International Style Exhibition***

Since the International Style Exhibition and its aftermath played such a central role in the postwar reception of Oud, it is essential to understand the current state of research on this subject. Despite the ubiquity of the term "International Style" in architectural publications, the first critical assessment of the actual exhibition did not take place until 1982, when three articles appeared in *Progressive Architecture*.<sup>4</sup> The

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4. Helen Searing, "International Style: The Crimson Connection," *Progressive Architecture* 63, no. 2 (1982): 88–91; Richard Guy Wilson, "International Style: The MoMA Exhibition," *Progressive Architecture* 63, no. 2 (1982): 92–104; Robert Stern, "International Style: Immediate Effects," *Progressive Architecture* 63, no. 2 (1982): 106–9. In the same month as the *Progressive Architecture* articles, Suzanne Stephens also called for a reexamination of the contents of the exhibition. Her article lists all the architects and their projects that were included plus the addition of several reviews of the exhibition from 1932 to make the argument that "there are still many entries in the show that demonstrate a broad range of modernist effort. It was indeed a fertile ground." The compilation of reviews are still especially useful today. Suzanne Stephens, "Looking Back at 'Modern Architecture,'" *Skyline* (February 1982): 18–27. A conference on the International Style at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University followed these articles in April 1982. For a report on this conference see Barry Bergdoll, "International Style Celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday," *Architectural Record* 170, no. 8 (1982): 45, 47, 49. which Hitchcock, Johnson and Mumford attended. Before these articles discussions of the International Style centered as much around the term as the content and significance of the exhibition. In 1951, Henry Russell Hitchcock actually began critical analysis of the exhibition with "The International Style Twenty Years After." Hitchcock defended the principles of the concept of the International Style even though he saw "elasticity" and "general growth" in the term. His tone shifted significantly in his foreword for the *International Style* in 1966. He argued that the exhibition was less important for promoting the term "International Style" than for capturing a moment in time in the development of modern architecture. This shift in perspective may have been partially influenced by his attendance at the Society of Architectural Historians' Modern Architecture Symposium in 1964, which critiqued the legacy of the International Style in its examination of the decade 1929–1939. Although a number of scholars who participated in the symposium critiqued the term "International Style" indirectly, William Jordy directly examined its legacy in "The International Style in the 1930s." He argued that most of the architecture from this decade actually modified the principles given by Hitchcock and Johnson. Jordy would expand on these ideas in his larger text, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, in which he noted that the term was used more by historians and critics than participants and that its application varied widely in America. See Henry Russell Hitchcock, "The International Style Twenty Years After," *Architectural Record* 110, (1951): 89–97; Henry Russell Hitchcock, "Foreword to the 1966 Edition,"

three articles looked beyond the simple principles of the term International Style—volume, regularity, and a lack of ornament—to establish areas of research about the exhibition that subsequent studies mined for further information: the connection between Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson; the formation of the exhibition, its display, and the accompanying publications; and the influence of the International Style on practitioners and the public in America.<sup>5</sup>

In the first of these three articles, Helen Searing examines the “crimson connection” between the organizers of the event and how this connection affected the development of the term “International Style.”<sup>6</sup> Although Searing credits Harvard with instilling Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson with a particular aesthetic sense, she credits Hitchcock alone with first using the term “International Style” in an article in *Hound and Horn*.<sup>7</sup> Under the influence of Le Corbusier’s *Towards a New Architecture*, Hitchcock described in this article a new style that he saw in America, “an American version of what is definitely not a French, nor a Dutch, nor a German, nor a Russian, but an international style.”<sup>8</sup> Searing notes that the combination of the two words helped to erase any European socialist associations with the word “international,” and that Johnson and Barr eventually capitalized this term to cement its iconic status.<sup>9</sup> Although she is critical of the lack of breadth of different types of modernism in the exhibition,

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*International Style* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), vii–xiii; *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 24, no. 1 (1965): 3–97; William Jordy, “The International Style in the 1930s,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 24, no. 1 (1965): 10–15; William Jordy, *American Buildings and their Architects*, vol. 3 (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1970).

5. Hitchcock and Johnson, 13.

6. Searing, 89.

7. *Ibid.*, 89.

8. Henry Russell Hitchcock, “Four Harvard Architects,” *Hound and Horn: A Harvard Miscellany*, 2, no. 1 (1928): 41–47. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*.

9. Johnson promoted the term in a piece of architectural criticism. See Philip Johnson, “The Architecture of the New School,” *The Arts* 17, no. 6 (1931): 393–98.

Searing reminds the reader that, rather than engage in “rueful recriminations,” scholarship should aim for a “reasoned re-examination of the time when that architecture [modernism] arrived here, radiant with promise.”<sup>10</sup>

In the second of the three articles, Richard Guy Wilson provides context for the exhibition and investigates its content. Wilson describes a modern movement emerging from a professional practice heavily influenced by Beaux-Arts style.<sup>11</sup> He argues that a general confusion existed about the nature of European modernism, since it appeared to represent so many different building types within one term (an issue that MoMA would attempt to remedy with its exhibition).<sup>12</sup> Critiquing the exhibition and its accompanying book, Wilson notes that *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* had become a sort of cookbook of do’s and don’ts that would define a worthy modern structure. The significance of the exhibition for Wilson is not that it changed the course of architecture, but rather that it summarized certain developments, publicized those developments, and gave them a name.<sup>13</sup>

In the final of the three articles, Robert Stern argues that the exhibition had no immediate influence on architectural practice in America, because the depression and the onset of World War caused a lack of building.<sup>14</sup> Despite these circumstances, Stern recognizes the influence of the term “International Style” on the public perception of modernism. He writes that modernism was well developed in America by the time of the exhibition, so that its effect was ultimately, only to historicize the concept rather than

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10. Searing, 91.

11. Wilson, 94.

12. Ibid., 95.

13. This argument closely followed Hitchcock’s analysis in his “Foreword to the 1966 Edition.” Ibid., 104.

14. Stern, 106.

to use it to inspire new works.<sup>15</sup> Stern's critique reveals that the definition of the International Style remained in the realm of publications and institutions rather than in the realm of practice—making the concept a function of reception rather than of development.

Ten years later, on the sixtieth anniversary of the exhibition, Terence Riley documented the exhibition in full in *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*.<sup>16</sup> “Although Exhibition 15 (as it is recorded in the museum's archives) has figured prominently in the development of architectural theory and practice in the twentieth century,” Riley noted, “no accurate visual record of the event exists.” Therefore, his study sought to document the curatorial development and display of the exhibition.<sup>17</sup> Riley's analysis follows the chronological development of the exhibition and he examines in detail the layout of the exhibition, including a complete record of the photos, plans, and models displayed.<sup>18</sup> Mary Anne Staniszewski has highlighted several of Riley's points of analysis and contextualized them within the larger exhibition program of MoMA in her insightful study *The Power of Display*.<sup>19</sup>

Another line of investigation has been attention to Hitchcock, Johnson, and Barr, and to the three featured international modernists other than Oud. The first studies in this field were conducted by Searing; these two studies analyze Hitchcock's historical

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15. Ibid., 106.

16. Terence Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992).

17. Ibid., 9.

18. Riley offered a similar though shorter analysis of the exhibition in his essay on Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art. See Terence Riley, “Portrait of the Curator as a Young Man,” in *Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art*, ed. John Elderfield (New York: Harry Abrams, 1998), 35–69.

19. Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

approach.<sup>20</sup> Although these articles mention the International Style Exhibition, the exhibition played only a small role in Hitchcock's prolific career. The most insightful, though short, account of Hitchcock's role in the organization of the exhibition is provided by Reyner Banham.<sup>21</sup> Banham notes that the true of achievement of the exhibition was that in it, "modern architecture, previously presented as an architecture *in potential*, is presented by Hitchcock and Johnson as a body of achieved monuments."<sup>22</sup> By using his training in formal analysis to select a group of "actual monuments," Hitchcock derived his argument for the emergence of a new style.

It has been difficult for scholars to learn more about Hitchcock's intentions for the exhibition, because his archive is closed until 2006. However, some headway has been made, mainly by studying Hitchcock's relationship with Oud. Paolo Scrivano began to investigate the modernist philosophy that guided Hitchcock's writings and the International Style Exhibition by looking at Hitchcock's correspondence with and essays about Oud.<sup>23</sup> Scrivano uses their correspondence to show how the unresolved historiographic issues between Oud and Hitchcock before World War II became the focal point of international discussions about Oud with the construction of his Shell Building in the postwar period. Scrivano expands this short examination of Hitchcock in his recently published *Storia di un'idea di architettura moderna: Henry Russell*

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20. Helen Searing, "Henry Russell Hitchcock: Architectura et Amicitia," in *In Search of Modern Architecture: A Tribute to Henry Russell Hitchcock*, ed. Helen Searing (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), 3–9; and Helen Searing, "Henry Russell Hitchcock: The Architectural Historian as Critic and Connoisseur," *Studies in the History of Art* 35 (1990): 251–63.

21. Reyner Banham, "A Set of Actual Monuments," *Architectural Review* 185, no. 1106 (1989): 89–92.

22. *Ibid.*, 90.

23. Paolo Scrivano, "J.J.P. Oud e l'architettura olandese negli scritti di Henry-Russell Hitchcock/Oud and Dutch architecture in the writings of Henry Russell Hitchcock," *Zodiac* 18, September 1997–February 1998, 90–103.

*Hitchcock e l'International style*.<sup>24</sup> By using related archival materials, Scrivano constructs a history not just of Hitchcock's development, but also of the development of modern architecture in America. He also does an excellent job of contextualizing the importance of the exhibition—and of Hitchcock himself—to future exhibitions that would use the International Style Exhibition as a model.

Scholars have also thoroughly analyzed the intellectual development of Johnson and Barr. These studies include close examinations of their respective roles in the International Style Exhibition. The most complete account of Johnson's participation is contained in Franz Schulze's biography, which attempts to clarify many of Johnson's own statements concerning his role in organizing the exhibition.<sup>25</sup> Schulze clearly describes the development of Johnson's interest in modern architecture and shows how his interactions with Barr and Hitchcock shaped this development.

Similarly, Sybil Kantor's recent comprehensive account of the development of Alfred Barr's aesthetic philosophy, and of his role as director of the Museum of Modern Art reflects the impact of this exhibition on Barr's thinking.<sup>26</sup> By analyzing Barr's intellectual development, Kantor uncovers Barr's complex conception of the history of art that linked the presentation of art works and stylistic analysis. Although these studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of interactions among the three, this aspect of their relationships can still be further clarified. Since Oud corresponded directly with each of them, understanding how each one received his

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24. Paolo Scrivano, *Storia di un'idea di architettura moderna: Henry-Russell Hitchcock e l'International style* (Milano: F. Angeli, 2001). Also see the book review, Nicholas Adams, "Storia di un'idea di architettura moderna: Henry Russell Hitchcock e l'International style," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61, no. 3 (2002): 412–416.

25. Franz Schulze, *Philip Johnson: Life and Work* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1994).

26. Sybil Kantor, *Alfred Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).



ideas helps us to analyze their respective roles in developing the exhibition. The correspondence also reveals Oud's reaction to the focused perspective of Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson.

At the same time, recent scholarship on Gropius, Mies, and Le Corbusier, provides a basis for a comparative perspective. Comparing Oud to these three architects becomes even more important when we consider that Hitchcock and Johnson employed the same comparative approach. For example, they state in the introduction of the International Style Exhibition catalog, "For Le Corbusier is perhaps the greatest theorist, the most erudite and the boldest experimenter, Gropius the most sociologically minded, Mies van der Rohe the most luxurious and elegant, while Oud of Rotterdam possesses the most sensitive and disciplined taste."<sup>27</sup> Oud became the practitioner, as he had in Germany, but in America, Hitchcock and Johnson gave Oud the additional expectation of an unlimited ability to refine his future forms within their stylistic parameters. This type of comparison derives from a tradition in art history of teaching through juxtapositions of different artists' works and helps to clarify the roles assigned by Hitchcock and Johnson to Gropius, Mies, and Corbusier in the exhibition.

Three recent studies about the relationship of these other architects to the American modernist movement provide the resources needed to compare Oud's reception with his contemporaries. Mardges Bacon's *Le Corbusier in America* examines the International Style Exhibition in the context of Le Corbusier's arrival in America in 1935 to deliver a series of lectures.<sup>28</sup> The strength of her study lies in its ability to examine the American modernist movement's expectations relative to Le

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27. Henry Russell Hitchcock et al., *Modern Architects*, 16.

28. Bacon.

Corbusier's architecture when he arrived, and his subsequent interactions with individuals and institutions in this movement. She views Le Corbusier's theories as central to the formation of American modernism before his arrival and that he is the most prominent European modernist in America in the years immediately following the International Style Exhibition. Likewise, her analysis focuses as much Le Corbusier's interest in America (*américanisme*) as his reception so that the exchange of discourse affects Le Corbusier as much as American modernism.

Rather than a single author, *Mies in America*, edited by Phyllis Lambert, is a series of essays that capture Mies' role in America. Cammie McAtee's essay, "Alien #5044325: Mies's First Trip to America," focuses most closely on his participation in the International Style Exhibition and describes how it created expectations for his architecture on the part of architects and the general public.<sup>29</sup> McAtee's analysis is a small part of the larger catalog that studies Mies's interactions with the American modernist movement and the way in which he responded to these expectations.

By focusing solely on reception, Margret Kentgens-Craig's study of the Bauhaus and America has more in common with my study of Oud than either Bacon's analysis of Le Corbusier or McAtee's study of Mies. Both my study and Kentgens-Craig's analysis concentrate on the issue of reception and use similar methods, such as the examination of exhibitions and journals, to form our arguments. Her study, however, treats not just Gropius, but the many Bauhaus figures that were introduced to America just in the interwar period.<sup>30</sup> In addition by focusing on the years 1919-1936—complementing Bacon's concentration on the years 1935–1947—she provides an analysis of

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29. Cammie McAtee, "Alien #5044325," in *Mies in America*, ed., Phyllis Lambert (New York: Harry Abrams, 2001), 132–191.

modernism in America before the International Style Exhibition through a discussion of debates, journals, and influential figures affecting its formation, which also illuminates Oud's reception. These studies that contextualize and analyze the role of the other European focus architects of the exhibition, provide most of the source material for my comparative analysis of Oud.

Oud may be the last of the four European architects to be analyzed because earlier scholars have, for the most part, viewed his role in the exhibition as unexceptional. This is probably due to his postwar reception. William Jordy noted in the 1965 conference on the International Style that, "it came as a surprise to me that the major contributors to the International Style prior to 1932 contributed so little *after* 1932. Oud contributed nothing at all."<sup>31</sup> Despite this sort of sentiment, a close examination of the actual exhibition shows that Oud in fact played an important role.

Riley notes on the first page of *The International Style* that the exhibition deserves a closer investigation, since discrepancies exist between materials in the exhibition and materials in the catalog and book. Oud stands out in this respect, since "none of the photographs of work by J.J.P. Oud in the catalogue were in the exhibition."<sup>32</sup> In addition, Oud seems to have partially inspired the exhibition, or at least Johnson's interest in the topic, as Riley notes that Johnson's "apprenticeship" in architectural history began with reading Hitchcock's work on J.J.P. Oud.<sup>33</sup> Oud's prolific correspondence with Hitchcock and Johnson also provides a great deal of the source material for Riley.

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30. Margret Kentgens-Craig.

31. Jordy, "The International Style in the 1930s," 11.

32. Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 9.

33. *Ibid.*, 13.

Nor do other attempts to focus on Oud's role in the International Style Exhibition develop a specific role for Oud. Scrivano, in his article on Hitchcock and his Dutch connections, develops Riley's interest in the correspondence between Hitchcock and Oud, but he not surprisingly does so more to provide a perspective on Hitchcock's development of an analysis for European architecture than to analyze Oud's role in the exhibition.<sup>34</sup> The recent catalog from the NAI uses a model of the "Johnson House" that Oud designed and constructed for the International Style Exhibition as a means of analyzing his participation in the exhibition. The authors note the importance of the model to Johnson, and they describe Oud's struggle to prepare it, but they do not compare his model to others in the exhibition. Oud's role in the exhibition is suggested only when the authors quote a letter from Johnson to Oud concerning the importance of the model: "So you see how important it is for my head and position to get the model. And I am sure you underestimate the importance of it yourself. After all, consider that I am propagating only you and Mies van der Rohe."<sup>35</sup> The NAI essay notes that in a later letter Johnson draws distinctions between Mies' intricate model and Oud's monochrome cardboard presentation.<sup>36</sup> Despite this implicit comparison, the subsequent analysis does not follow this lead, and the authors instead note how little critical attention the house attracted.

The absence of an in-depth analysis of the model raises some of the larger questions about Oud that remain unanswered. Oud's model of Johnson's parents'

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34. Scrivano, "J.J.P. Oud e l'architettura olandese negli scritti di Henry-Russell Hitchcock/Oud and Dutch architecture in the writings of Henry-Russell Hitchcock," 90–103.

35. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 8 July 1931, File 66, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; quoted in Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 327.

36. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 16 April 1932, File 68, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; quoted in Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 328.

house was the only model of the four featured in the final gallery that had not been constructed. The other three models were Le Corbusier's "Villa Savoye," Frank Lloyd Wright's "Mesa House," and Mies' "Tugendhat House." The display of Oud's model ran counter to one of the chief goals of the exhibition, which was to convince the American public of the inevitability of the modern movement by displaying examples of constructed buildings. In addition, the buildings that attracted Hitchcock to Oud's forms and impressed Johnson with his ability were social housing, and these were also featured in the exhibition. By displaying a model that captured all of the forms of the modern style, but did not yet exist, Hitchcock and Johnson may have sought to demonstrate a fertile, if as yet unfulfilled, expectation for Oud's future architecture.

### ***Developing Arguments for Oud's Forms: Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson***

Even before they joined forces to present Oud's architecture in the International Style Exhibition of 1932, Barr, Hitchcock and Johnson had developed similar stylistic analyses of Oud's work. Although Oud had other American contacts, he would rise to prominence in the modern American architectural movement through the interests of this trio. Their common interest in modern art that developed at Harvard largely shaped their analysis of modern architecture and helped to draw them together at the Museum of Modern Art. In Cambridge, Hitchcock and Barr had studied under the guidance of Paul Sachs, an art history professor and the director of the Fogg Museum, who emphasized understanding the formal qualities of an artwork and the meaning that could be derived from its analysis.<sup>37</sup> Sachs had no formal art education; he had

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37. The training that Sachs received as an undergraduate at Harvard was heavily influenced by the ideals of Charles Eliot Norton, who founded the art department at Harvard in 1874. Norton believed that "the

educated himself largely on travel, and on long hours spent looking at artworks in galleries and museums. These practices became the foundations for his teaching; Sachs insisted that students have firsthand knowledge of the objects in their field of study.<sup>38</sup> Thus, when Hitchcock and Barr began to analyze the architecture of the European avant-garde, they were not inclined to address its push for social reform, but instead attempted to decipher its appearance through their own lenses of formal analysis.<sup>39</sup>

The type of travel that Sachs encouraged led Barr to his first encounter with Oud's architecture in 1927, during a long European trip to view modern art and architecture for a class that he taught at Wellesley. He described his time in Holland in a short article in *The Arts* (1920–1922, 1923–1931), a journal dedicated to the discussion of form, materials, and process in all aspects of the arts.<sup>40</sup> Although this article did not focus on Oud's architecture, in it Barr assessed the Dutch context of

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history of the arts should always be related to the history of civilization; that monuments should be interpreted as expressions of the peculiar genius of the people who produced them; that fundamental principles of design should be emphasized as a basis for aesthetic judgments; and that opportunities for training in drawing and painting should be provided for all serious students of the subject." Samuel Morrison, ed., *Development of Harvard University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 133 quoted in Kantor, 43. Sachs expressed an interest in art during his undergraduate studies at Harvard, but his father made him join the family banking business. Although art history did not yet exist as a discipline at Harvard, Sachs was appointed director of the Fogg Museum at Harvard at the age of thirty-seven with no formal training—not surprisingly, given that the discipline barely existed. Instead, his analysis of artworks was based on a connoisseurial interest in determining quality through the assessment of formal characteristics. Interestingly, Philip Johnson's path to acquiring architectural training resembled that of Sachs in that Johnson, like Sachs, spent time traveling in Italy to gain knowledge of the great works of art before beginning work at Harvard. For more information see *Works from the Collection of Paul J. Sachs* (Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum, 1965); James Cuno, "Edward W. Forbes, Paul J. Sachs, and the Origins of the Harvard University Art Museums," in *Harvard's Art Museums: 100 Years of Collecting*, James Cuno (New York: Harry Abrams, 1996); John Coolidge and Caroline Jones, *Modern Art at Harvard* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985).

38. Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Athenaeum, 1973), 12.

39. Edward Eigen, "Elective Affinities: Philip Johnson and the Avant-garde," *Assemblage*, no. 29 (1996): 124.

40. Barr had been hired by *The Arts* to write "dispatches" from his European travels; see Sybil Kantor, 149, and Lynes, 27–28.

Oud's work and mentioned an upcoming in-depth analysis of Oud's architecture by Hitchcock.<sup>41</sup>

Much like his future foreword for the catalog of the International Style Exhibition; and his introduction to the accompanying book, Barr's article provided the overall concept which Hitchcock and Johnson then analyzed and promoted. After analyzing the forms of the expressionist Amsterdam School, Barr described a contrasting trend in Dutch modernism: "The second, more austere, and certainly more important modern style, is the purely geometric. In its general character this style is, of course, not confined to Holland, but has been developed also in Germany, Paris and Moscow under a variety of names."<sup>42</sup> By forming links between the Dutch modern movement and other European ones, Barr created the framework for the idea of an international modernism.

But more important to Barr than demonstrating the ubiquity of the geometric modern forms was establishing architecture as a fine art equal to painting and sculpture. To this end, his description of Dutch modern architecture began with painting: "The flat red, white and yellow rectangles of Piet Mondrian's paintings are the most nearly absolute expression of the geometric style; but the architecture of Oud and Dudok and Van Doesburg carries similar principles of design to a more practical application."<sup>43</sup> In revealing a connection between painting and architecture, Barr was not just devising a system of analysis; rather, he was expressing his own deeply held belief that modern architecture was also a fine art. His inclusion of Oud in the passage quoted above, combined with his belief in architecture as an art open to formal analysis, revealed

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41. Alfred Barr, "Dutch Letter," *The Arts* 13, no. 1 (1928): 48–9.

42. *Ibid.*, 48.

43. *Ibid.*, 49.

Barr's ability to capture a complex idea in a single paragraph—a skill he would employ for the future International Style Exhibition.

Following his travels, Barr attempted to develop means of organizing all of the various modern movements in Europe into a cohesive grouping. Barr hoped to use a museum exhibition to achieve this goal, perhaps inspired by Sachs, who had emphasized that the museum was the site both of a direct confrontation between the viewer and the object and of an intellectual connection between elite ideas and the mass audience.<sup>44</sup> The challenge for a museum exhibition of architecture was to present three-dimensional buildings in a persuasive format without losing the connection between the viewer and the object. Even though Barr was an accomplished art historian, his talents, as evidenced in his brief article on Holland, lay as much in his ability to capture a controlling idea in a single thought as in explicating the meaning of the concept. In the case of the International Style, Barr gave that job to Hitchcock and Johnson. Hitchcock, especially, played a significant role in creating a language for architecture that described the system of relationships that Barr believed existed among all the objects of modern life.<sup>45</sup>

As Barr noted in his article, Henry Russell Hitchcock, his Harvard classmate, whose aesthetic approach to modern architecture was similar to his own, was to publish

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44. Kantor, 84, and Lynes, 12.

45. Barr's conception of the relationship among all the objects of modern life is captured in his description of the "Tradition and Revolt in Modern Painting" class that he taught at Wellesley: "Vision and Representation. Pictorial Organization. The place of subject matter. The achievement of the past—especially the nineteenth century. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, its gods and *isms*. The painter, critic, dealer, collector, the museum; the academies; the public. Contemporary painting in relation to sculpture, the graphic arts, architecture, the stage, music, literature, commercial and decorative arts. Fashionable aesthetics; fetish and taboo. Painting and modern life. The Future." Alfred Barr to parents, February 1926, Museum Archives, MoMA, NY; quoted in Kantor, 92.



a more focused analysis of Oud's architecture in the following issue of *The Arts*.<sup>46</sup>

Hitchcock's "The Architectural Work of J.J.P. Oud" was the first in-depth overview of Oud's efforts to be published in English.<sup>47</sup> It appears that Hitchcock became interested in Oud's work through his correspondence with Berlage and Peter Smith, a friend from Harvard who also knew Oud, and began his investigation of Oud's architecture through its forms.<sup>48</sup>

In May 1928, just before his article was published in *The Arts*, Hitchcock wrote to Oud with a series of questions the purpose of which was to connect Oud's forms with his design philosophy. These questions show that Hitchcock's analysis of Oud's work was still in the process of development. After asking for Oud's birthdate and about his educational background, Hitchcock inquired about basic research materials. Had Oud published any new articles? Had he completed any new projects? His eagerness to acquire comprehensive information about Oud's most recent projects even led him to ask a question that must have been painful for Oud to answer: "Is the Rotterdam Bourse now in construction?"<sup>49</sup>

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46. Barr was probably familiar with Hitchcock's views on modern architecture, since he had invited Hitchcock to lecture for one of his classes at Wellesley in 1926, even though Hitchcock was still studying for his master's in architectural history at Harvard. In his lecture, Hitchcock stressed the role that Oud and Le Corbusier played in his development of a history for modern architecture. Barr even acknowledged that Hitchcock had introduced him to modern architecture. Kantor, 105.

47. Henry Russell Hitchcock, "The Architectural Works of J.J.P. Oud," *The Arts* 13, no. 2 (1928): 97–103.

48. Searing describes Smith as "a graduate of Harvard College who briefly attended the Harvard School of Architecture, was one of the friends who Hitchcock could most knowledgeably discuss advanced European architecture. He worked in Paris for André Lurçat and also knew Le Corbusier. Hitchcock dedicated his first book to Smith, who died prematurely in 1928." This was a friendship that Oud also shared as evidenced by his obituary for Smith in *i10*. Searing, "Henry Russell Hitchcock: Architectura et Amicitia," note 15, 8. J.J.P. Oud, "In Memory of Peter van der Meulen-Smith," *i10* 2, no. 19 (1929): 122–23. Also see Searing, "International Style: The Crimson Connection," 1, and Richard Guy Wilson, "International Style: The MOMA Exhibition," *Progressive Architecture* 63, no. 2 (1982): 5.

49. Henry Russell Hitchcock to J.J.P. Oud, 30 May 1928, File 51, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

These additional details were not the focus of Hitchcock's study, however, since the study did not examine Oud's role as a practitioner. Rather, it provided the context for the stylistic analysis of Oud's work. Hitchcock presented Oud's struggle to design modern architecture as an archetype, rather than as a particular path defined by biographical detail:

Architecture should be devoid of elements introduced for the sake of ornament alone: to the engineering solution of a building problem nothing should be added. Architecture should by means of fine proportions make ornamental all the elements necessary in building: through geometry the engineering solution of the building problem as a whole and in detail must be subjected to the creative inspiration of the architect. These two propositions, the one negative, the other positive, form the solid basis on which contemporary architecture rests. On a logical amplification of the aesthetic which these axioms, literally understood, postulate, the greatest architects of today are establishing the style of the future. . . Rigid is this aesthetic. . . and within its canons genius, as ever, is able to build with real and even individual character, as the little-known work of J.J.P. Oud reveals.<sup>50</sup>

From this broad base, Hitchcock created a narrative that witnessed the emergence of Oud's forms from the early influence of Berlage, and their evolution into a truly modern expression under the influences of De Stijl and the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright.<sup>51</sup>

Oud's emergence both from a previous style and the influence of Wright made Oud a useful model for Hitchcock to encourage America to embrace a similar transformation to a modern style—a style that was not influenced by the Beaux-Arts.

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50. Hitchcock, "The Architectural Work of J.J.P. Oud," 97.

51. Ibid., 99.

Hitchcock believed that European modern architecture like Oud's could advance American modernism beyond the early efforts of Wright.<sup>52</sup> Oud's architecture represented a case study for this progression, since Wright's influence could be seen in Oud's earlier works, but not in his later ones.<sup>53</sup>

Hitchcock also argued that Oud's architecture, unlike, for example, Le Corbusier's, had developed out of previous influences. Continual refinement of forms, rather than innovation, made Oud the modernist leader in Holland.<sup>54</sup> This role as a refiner of a modern vocabulary was one that Oud would play again in the International Style Exhibition.

The article also illustrates Hitchcock's ability to create distinctions among modern architects by having each one play a specific role in the development of European modernism. Here Le Corbusier served as the foil, since his work was already known in America, as evidenced by the popularity of his *Towards a New Architecture*. Oud, by comparison, had overcome "far more serious external and internal obstacles," and thus was still developing.<sup>55</sup> Hitchcock and Johnson continued to refine this role for Oud as both a master of modern forms and one who had the potential to achieve even greater designs.

Under what I would call Hitchcock's progressive model, Oud's evolution had begun at Oud-Mathenesse, which even with its pitched roofs, revealed "brilliantly the

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52. At this time Hitchcock felt that Wright's best architecture was behind him. For example, in Hitchcock's *Modern Architecture*, Wright is praised as part of the "New Tradition" along with figures like Louis Sullivan. Wright is not part of the more recent "New Pioneers," even if his work inspires them. Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*, 113–18. Also see Schulze, 82.

53. Ibid.

54. Of course, recent scholarship has revealed that Corbusier knew and practiced with forms as much as, or even more than, Oud. See Stanislaus von Moos and Arthur Rüegg, eds., *Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

55. Hitchcock, "The Architectural Work of J.J.P. Oud," 99.

new possibilities” of geometrical design. Hitchcock argued that Oud produced his first truly independent vision in his Hoek van Holland housing. This housing appeared “devoid of even such inherited elements” as Oud’s earlier projects, so that in it Oud became the “complete master of the new manner.”<sup>56</sup> Oud’s architecture had by now advanced so much that Hitchcock could confidently anticipate the construction of Oud’s Bourse in Rotterdam with the words “It should be as great and as fine a monument of the new manner as was that of Berlage, at Amsterdam, which initiated the old.”<sup>57</sup>

The article served as the basis for two other studies concerning Oud on which Hitchcock was working simultaneously. The first was *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*, a survey of the origins and path of modern architecture, published in 1929. In this survey, Hitchcock connected Oud to the multinational movement to which he had alluded in *The Arts*.<sup>58</sup> The second, *J.J.P. Oud*, a monograph on Oud’s architecture, which expanded some of Hitchcock’s analysis in *The Arts*, but which for various reasons, was not published until 1931.<sup>59</sup> Despite the difference in the scope of the two projects, both focused on the formal analysis of Oud’s architecture.

In *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*, Hitchcock returned to the image that he had first used in *The Arts* of the “father” Berlage and the precocious “son” Oud and expanded it beyond the borders of Holland. After discussing the nineteenth-century origins of the modern movement, he described in detail how modern New Traditionalists had arisen from the profusion of nineteenth-century styles, to be

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56. Ibid., 103.

57. Ibid.

58. Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1929), 175–86.

followed by the more refined efforts of the younger Pioneers. The narrative established a linear progression of style and the lineal descent of its formulation from architectural “fathers” such as Berlage, Peter Behrens, and Auguste Perret to their respectively more refined “sons,” Oud, Gropius, and Le Corbusier.

Even though chapter fifteen, “The New Pioneers: Holland,” begins with a quotation from one of Oud’s essays, Hitchcock refrains from analyzing Oud’s thinking and concentrates instead on his forms. Hitchcock’s acknowledgment that “the literary activity of Oud has been less extensive than that of Le Corbusier but of the most valid sort. . . more intelligible, more clearly thought out, and more specific,” was an idea analyzed by Hitchcock through Oud’s built forms rather than directly through references to specific texts. But, this acknowledgment that he had read many of Oud’s articles may cast light on the source for Hitchcock’s lineal format for the book. Hitchcock would have surely read Oud’s *Bauhaus Book*, published two years earlier. In addition, Oud’s “Modern Architecture in Holland: Its Past Present and Future”<sup>60</sup> offered a persuasive template for a historical analysis resulting in rational design.<sup>61</sup>

Hitchcock continued the argument begun in his *Arts* article, that Oud’s architecture was significant not only for its early and well defined emergence, but also because Oud’s design process held potential for more refined future forms. Just as he had in his previous article, Hitchcock traced the refinement of Oud’s architecture—a refinement based in “the balanced fusion of technique and expression”—through a

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59. Henry Russell Hitchcock, *J.J.P. Oud*.

60. J.J.P. Oud, *Holländische Architektur*.

61. Kentgens-Craig argues that Gropius’s *Internationale Architektur* served as the model for Hitchcock’s *Modern Architecture*. But although Hitchcock’s book has certain affinities with Gropius’s book, Hitchcock’s book is closer to that of Oud’s “Modern Architecture in Holland” Its Past, Present and Future.”

biographical analysis of Oud's career.<sup>62</sup> But, he claimed, the real importance of Oud's architecture lay in the nature of its completed forms—a position that the critics would take again three years later in the International Style Exhibition. Hitchcock wrote that although European modern ideas still mainly existed in theory rather than practice, Oud's housing represented the way in which the goals of European design could be realized:

More than Le Corbusier, therefore, the story of Oud as a New Pioneer indicates a sure route forward. When his influence comes generally to surpass that of the other, the new architecture will be more completely and soundly established. . . Toward these new territories Oud has mapped the roads along which advance may be made. . . a reality lacking in the designs of Le Corbusier which remain still dreamlike even when they are executed.<sup>63</sup>

Unlike Oud, Corbusier appeared unconnected to the realities of everyday life. Whether Corbusier fulfilled his modern architectural proclamations with actual built works did not really matter, since he had provided persuasive formulas to define modernism. Oud was expected to build the forms that Hitchcock had written about, and to continue to refine his own efforts on the “sure route forward.” Hitchcock may have realized that Oud's continuing evolution offered an instructive and practical path for American architects who were emerging from the Beaux-Arts and were now attempting to design modern forms.

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62. Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*, 182.

63. *Ibid.*, 182.

Hitchcock began writing the Oud monograph and *Modern Architecture* almost simultaneously, but in the monograph he focused less on Oud's inclusion in the larger movement, and more on his development from traditional foundations into a modern master.<sup>64</sup> Tracing a stylistic development through a biographical analysis, Hitchcock argued that Oud's transformation of an existing traditional-styled building, "Katwijk-aan-Zee," to a conglomeration of modern forms was the point where Oud's work turned from Berlage-inspired forms to "true" modernism.<sup>65</sup> Hitchcock argued not just that Oud was modern, but that he had addressed fundamental architectural problems:

Next to modern architects whose genius sometimes seems to be nothing more than a lack of consistency, and in opposition to architects and social critics for whom our architecture must develop in spite of aesthetic considerations, Oud remains in the great tradition accordingly wherein architecture is the product of a slow and complete work of the spirit.<sup>66</sup>

By extending Oud's design solutions beyond the present day, Hitchcock endowed the modern movement with an idealism and timelessness that linked it to other important historical periods for architecture.

When the monograph eventually appeared, in 1931, it met with little success in Europe. Hitchcock may have been surprised, since the format of the book—a short text preceding a series of photos of buildings, generally without humans—resembled the

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64. Oud had asked that Hitchcock write his biography even though André Lurçat, the editor of "Les Maîtres de L'Architecture Moderne," wanted Piet Mondrian to do so. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 322.

65. Hitchcock, *J.J.P. Oud*, 3.

66. "A côté des architectes modernes chez qui le génie paraît quelquefois n'être qu'un manque de suite dans les idées, et en opposition aux architectes et critiques sociogues pour lesquels notre architecture

format of similar books by European architects.<sup>67</sup> The lack of sales may be attributed to the economic depression or to the fact that Oud had not produced a significant international building since the Weissenhof in 1927, or both. In any event, the book sold only twenty-two out of five hundred copies in Europe.<sup>68</sup>

Philip Johnson, the third and final member of the group, supported Hitchcock's formal analysis of modern architecture. But he probably realized that to ensure that his ideas did not meet a similar fate as Hitchcock's book, he must promote Oud's ability to produce forms. To this end, Johnson emphasized Oud's ability as a practitioner in his writings.

In many ways, Philip Johnson had more invested in the success of modern architecture in America, and in that of figures like Oud who were linked with the movement, than did Hitchcock or Barr. While Barr had been a noted modern art historian at Wellesley, and Hitchcock had already published his *Modern Architecture* and numerous articles on the modern movement, Johnson was still learning about modern architecture in 1929. Johnson had met Barr at his sister's graduation from Wellesley and had met Hitchcock when he attended Sachs's classes at Harvard. Sachs's tutelage had prepared Johnson for his "transformation" to an advocate for modern architecture, which he attributed to Hitchcock's article on Oud in *The Arts*.<sup>69</sup> Johnson joined the Museum of Modern Art in an unpaid position in 1929, and it was here that he once again came in contact with Hitchcock and Barr. Despite Johnson's

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doit se développer en dépit des considérations esthétiques, Oud reste dans la grande tradition selon laquelle l'architecture est le produit d'un lent et complet travail de l'esprit." Ibid., 6.

67. This was a typical European format for publication, see, e.g., Bruno Taut, *Modern Architecture* (London: The Studio, 1929) and Hendrik Petrus Berlage, ed., *Moderne Bouwkunst in Nederland*, (Rotterdam: W.L. & J. Brusse, 1932).

68. Paolo Scrivano, "J.J.P. Oud and Dutch Architecture in the Writings of Henry Russell Hitchcock," 99.



rather limited formal training in art and architecture, he made significant contributions as they together attempted to define the nature of the modern movement through the Harvard standard of superior works by representative architects.

Johnson may have recognized the inadequacy of his own training compared to that of Barr and Hitchcock. He sought to overcome this deficit by the traditional method of travel, as the two Harvard graduates had done before him. Johnson's formal education began in 1929, when he spent a summer traveling across Europe to visit architectural sites, both old and new, recommended by Barr.<sup>70</sup> One of the first modern sites that he visited was the Weissenhof Siedlung in Stuttgart. In a letter to his family back in the States, he observed that the housing complex offered "my first view of things by Le Corbusier, Gropius and Oud, the three greatest living architects."<sup>71</sup> Not only were the buildings uniform in style with their flat roofs and cubic forms, but also their lack of historical detail presented an architecture that needed little formal training to understand. Buttressing his own position with that of Barr, Johnson quickly discounted the sociological aspects of the architecture and focused on its stylistic elements.

Oud's inclusion in Weissenhof further convinced Johnson of Oud's status, and of Oud's evolving role as a fixed point in his own developing knowledge of modernist architecture.<sup>72</sup> Even though the buildings at the Weissenhof were all similar in appearance, Johnson expressed an affinity with Oud's architecture in his

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69. Franz Schulze, *Philip Johnson*, 5, 45. **Searing, "Henry Russell Hitchcock: Architectura et Amicitia," 3–9.**

70. Schulze, 52. Also see Philip Johnson to Louise Johnson, 18 August 1929, Philip Johnson Papers, Getty Institute, Santa Monica, CA: "I like the work by the best architects best. I mean that the ones that Barr and those people said were the greatest are head and shoulders above the rest of the mob."

71. Philip Johnson to Louise Johnson, 18 August 1929.

72. Francesco Dal Co, "Philip Johnson 'a timid designer' nell'eta dei patriarchi," *Cassabella* 60, no. 636 (1996): 1–3. Kentgens-Craig argues a similar point with respect to the reception of the Bauhaus, noting

correspondence: “Oud on the other hand, I feel is a kindred spirit [as compared to “not quite beautiful” Le Corbusier]. If you know what the feeling is, I feel if I were an architect I should build that way.”<sup>73</sup> When Johnson visited Rotterdam later in 1929, he again expressed his enthusiasm for Oud’s architecture—and his own fickle nature: “Today we [Johnson and John McAndrew] have discovered the world’s greatest architect, J.J.P. Oud, the city architect of Rotterdam. For the time being we are quite fanatic about him; we shall probably come to our senses and our critical faculties will reassert themselves, but today we are quite under his spell.”<sup>74</sup> The “spell” seemed to have some staying power, for he wrote to his mother later in his travels that Oud’s Hoek van Holland housing stood as “the modern Parthenon.”<sup>75</sup> Immediately upon his return, Johnson began to promote Oud’s architecture, calling it a high point in the modern style—or “masterpiece,” in Harvard terminology, even as he justified his own method of learning through the process.<sup>76</sup>

In 1930, Johnson returned to Europe with Hitchcock to study specifically modern works of architecture, with the intention of compiling their observations into an illustrated book on the subject. Johnson had conceived a similar idea during his travels the year before, but had realized that his knowledge of the subject was inadequate.<sup>77</sup> During his

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that the Weissenhof “enhanced the tendency [of Americans] to gloss over differences” which “may have propagated a sense of closure in the European movement.” Kentgens-Craig, 40–41.

73. Philip Johnson to Louise Johnson, 18 August 1929.

74. Philip Johnson to Louise Johnson, 22 September 1929, Philip Johnson Papers, Getty Institute, Santa Monica, CA.

75. “John McAndrew and I have been traveling, rather fast to be sure, but traveling all over Germany and Holland to find modern architecture. We still think that Oud’s Hook houses are the Parthenon of modern Europe. That is putting it a little strongly, but they are splendid.” Philip Johnson to Alfred Barr, 16 October 1929, Alfred Barr Papers, Museum Archives, MoMA, NY.

76. Johnson believed that the visits to the modern sites gave him “a tremendous advantage” over contemporaries in architectural criticism. Philip Johnson to Louise Johnson, 6 August 1930, Philip Johnson Papers, Museum Archives, MoMA, NY. Also quoted in Kantor, 283.

77. The previous summer, Johnson was so taken with the apparent uniformity of design that he conceived a book and a series of articles, to be written with his traveling companion, John McAndrew,

time back in America, Johnson had read Gustav Adolf Platz's *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit*, and this book served as an architectural travel guide during his second trip.<sup>78</sup> Not only did it suggest the internationalism of the new architecture, but it also provided the criteria for describing what would become the International Style. Although Johnson distanced the concept of the International Style from Platz's social foundations for modernism, he fully intended to illustrate Platz's belief that, "we are at the beginning of a development process . . . that will precipitate a new style."<sup>79</sup>

The book as the two authors conceived it at this time would combine the knowledge and authority of Hitchcock with Johnson's sense of presentation. Johnson described it in a letter to his mother from his travels: "So what the plan is now is to rewrite [Hitchcock's *Modern Architecture*] in a more popular way paying close attention to the buildings illustrated, parts of his book and incorporate about 150 full page half-tones. The text will be first and then the pictures in a bunch."<sup>80</sup> In effect, this was the beginning of the International Style Exhibition, with respect to both the concept and to the roles that Hitchcock and Johnson would later play.<sup>81</sup>

Although the book was not published until 1932, following the International Style Exhibition, Johnson attempted to apply his new knowledge of modernism immediately. Upon his return to America, he focused his energies on promoting evidence of a

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illustrating and explicating the modern style. The projects were never completed, but the idea served as a precursor to the proposed book by Hitchcock and Johnson. Schulze, 52.

78. Kentgens-Craig makes a persuasive argument for the connection between the International Style and Platz's book. Not only does she reveal Johnson's reference to the book in a review, but she also illustrates how the categories of the International Style parallel the section headings in Platz's work. Kentgens-Craig, 163–66. Also see Gustav Adolf Platz, *Baukunst der neuesten Zeit* (Berlin: IM Propyläen-Verlag, 1927). Philip Johnson, "Modernism in Architecture," *The New Republic* 18 March 1931, 134.

79. Platz, 65. Also see Kentgens-Craig, 165.

80. Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 12.

81. Both Riley and Schulze view this as the beginning of the International Style Exhibition, though Schulze notes additionally that Johnson had spoken of such a publication in more vague terms during his

European modern style in America, in the Rejected Architects Exhibition of 1931. The exhibition defined the Museum of Modern Art's position on modern architecture initially by what it was not, rather than by what it was. It ran concurrently with the Architectural League's annual exhibition, which consisted largely of Beaux-Arts works, along with a jumbled display of models, photos, and art related to architecture. Johnson wanted the Rejected Architects Exhibition to present a concise and simple argument for modernism.<sup>82</sup>

Presenting modernism through a series of photos and models, Johnson produced a show that included mixed entertainment with a simple message. He commented on this effective mixture more than thirty years later:

It seems humorous now, but it was deadly serious at that time. . . so angry did we get at this, that some of us, Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art, and I, the Director-to-be of the Department of Architecture, set up an exhibition in a storefront on Sixth Avenue which we called "Rejected Architects," after the famous Salon des Refusés of Paris a hundred years ago. We showed men like Alfred Clauss and Oscar Stonorov, who are now such well-known Philadelphia architects, and we made a lot of noise by having sandwich men parade up and down Lexington Avenue in front of the Grand Central

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European travels the previous year. Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 12; and Schulze, 52, 60–61.

82. The Architectural League was founded in 1881 as an alternative to the American Institute of Architects. From its earliest days, the League embraced the ideal of collaboration. Sculptors and muralists were invited to join the group, and they exhibited alongside landscape architects, painters, and architects in the annual juried exhibitions. This process of inclusion, of course, eventually created an unwieldy exhibition. Johnson's concise Rejected Architects Exhibition responded to the chaos of the Architectural League's exhibit—a chaos that Harold Sterner had described in his review of the 1928 exhibition: "It is doubtful whether even the admirers of the Architectural League would call this year's exhibition an inspiring one. . . the general attitude has been that there has to be an annual show which must be gotten through with in one way or another. A more careful scrutiny reveals a good deal of important and excellent work; but the task of finding it is sufficient to prevent its discovery by any save a patient enthusiast." Harold Sterner, "The Architectural League," *The Arts* 13, no. 3 (1928): 184.

Palace, to call attention to the unfairness of the League. The League was to us the Establishment that needed doing away with.<sup>83</sup>

Although many of the models in the exhibition represented unbuilt projects, they still offered tangible evidence of the viability of Johnson's concept and directly answered what he had described as the Architectural League's dismissal of modernism as "unrealizable dreams."<sup>84</sup> Johnson also convinced "phantom patrons," such as his parents, to "commission" designs for the exhibition, a method that he would use for a design by Oud in the International Style Exhibition.<sup>85</sup>

A pamphlet that accompanied the exhibition (a practice that Barr eventually demanded of all MoMA exhibitions) revealed how Sachs' lessons about the value of a European model had come down through Barr and Hitchcock to Johnson. Johnson noted that the architects displayed in the exhibition had "little in common with the capricious and illogical work of the 'modernistic' who have recently won such popularity in America."<sup>86</sup> Instead, Johnson emphasized that all of the architects displayed had studied under European modern architects and offered a new European-inspired style to replace the Beaux-Arts. Johnson succinctly described the guidelines for this new style in the final paragraph of the pamphlet:

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83. Philip Johnson published dinner speech at the annual meeting of the Architectural League of New York, 26 May 1965, in the League's *News Bulletin*, September 1965, 1–4. Johnson reinforced his efforts with an article in *Creative Arts*, where he observed that the public would be "thrilled" with this exhibition, since, "not every day does the orderly profession of architecture dramatize itself in a blaze of controversy." Philip Johnson, "The Rejected Architects," *Creative Arts* 8, no. 6 (1931): 433.

84. Johnson, "The Rejected Architects," 43.

85. The exhibition included a model by Clauss and Daub for "House in Pinehurst, NC." Subsequently, Johnson's parents also commissioned Oud for a design for a house in Pinehurst for the International Style Exhibition. Thus Oud's commission had a tested precursor. See Johnson, "The Rejected Architects," 434.

86. Philip Johnson, *Rejected Architects* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1931), 1; republished in *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 215.

These are the important elements in the International Style:

1. The design depends primarily on the function, which the building is to serve without consideration of traditional principles of symmetry.
2. The style takes advantage of new principles of construction and new materials such as concrete, steel and glass.

As a result the style is characterized by flexibility, lightness and simplicity. Ornament has no place, since hand-cut ornament is impracticable in an industrial age. The beauty of the style rests in the free composition of volumes and surfaces, the adjustments of such elements as doors and windows, and the perfection of machined surfaces.<sup>87</sup>

Although he was less of a disciple of Sachs than Barr and Hitchcock, Johnson had found a method of display that confronted the viewer with the power of the building, as the sculptural form of the models appeared surrounded by the reality of its built form in photographs on the gallery walls. The uniformity of the method of display also reinforced the sense of a cohesiveness of intent among the individual architects. Johnson's ability to develop a single term, the International Style, connected to a formula allowed him to carry the modern architectural debate beyond the professional journals to a wider audience—one that could be persuaded as much by presentation as by content.

By employing the term International Style, Johnson, Barr, and Hitchcock sought to strengthen their argument by attaching the phrase to architects and structures that fit their conception of a unified modern style. Oud was the perfect architect for this purpose, since he was largely apolitical and his buildings, such as the Hoek van

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87. Ibid.

Holland, could be argued to be highly refined examples of a stylistic revolution.<sup>88</sup> Johnson would empower Hitchcock's concepts of style in the American modern movement by presenting Oud as a practitioner. Oud, the thoughtful practitioner, would be contrasted to the theorist Corbusier, and the radical teacher Gropius. Oud's architecture held an unlimited potential—a potential that until then had been seen only in the work of Mies van der Rohe. By promoting Oud and his architecture, together with the three other European modernists, Johnson secured a influential position not only for these chosen architects, but also for the Museum of Modern Art and for himself, as leaders in defining European modernism in America.

### ***Oud in America before the International Style Exhibition***

In the late 1920s, J.J.P. Oud's architecture came into contact with the fledgling modern American movement—a movement that attempted to define itself against the reigning Beaux-Arts tradition. In their attempts to define American modernism, architects in America generally followed one of three different courses. Architects who followed the first course pursued an interest in the diagrammatic aspect of architecture. Their designs were derived from the emphasis on the plan in the Beaux-Arts movement, and from the desire to merge this focus with an awareness of modern needs.<sup>89</sup> Architects who followed the second course sought to develop an America modern movement based on the social benefits of modern design. These architects, led by the

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88. Lehning, "Introduction."

89. For more information on the American modernist architects' interest in the diagrammatic aspect of architecture see Paul Bentel, *Modernism in American Architecture, 1919–1933* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, 1992); Hyungin Pai, *From the Portfolio to the Diagram—Architectural Discourse and the Transformation of the Discipline of Architecture in America 1918–1943* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002) and Bacon 17–25.

thinking of Lewis Mumford (1895—1990), might have believed that Oud's socially inspired standardized housing offered a good example of this process. Architects who followed the third course wanted to import a European modernism based on style and to apply its forms to American conditions. Henry Russell Hitchcock, Alfred Barr, and Philip Johnson supported these architects. Rather than creating a broad base for the reception of Oud's architecture, proponents of each of these three competing visions attempted to "claim" individual architects like Oud. Furthermore, they expected these architects, once claimed, to support their respective positions with their future production. For example, MoMA promoted exhibitions of architects that appeared to continue to follow the International Style, as was done in the case of Gropius and Mies.<sup>90</sup>

Although these three groups were distinct in their intentions, Oud seemed to understand, through a steady correspondence with figures from all sides of the modern architectural debate in America, that none of the three groups had a clear interpretation of modernism. Lönberg-Holm, a former member of the Bauhaus who had been given a teaching position at Michigan largely as the result of his competition design for the Chicago Tribune Building (1923), gave Oud his first glimpse of the difference between the expectations of architects in America and of architects in Europe:

You see— the "new ideas" seem rather confused. When people over here speak about "modern European architecture" the[y] mean an awful lot: Poelzig, Moderne Bauformen, Mendelsohn, Amsterdam, Schweden, Innen Dekoration and the bad part of the German

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90. Hebert Bayer, Walter Gropius, and Ise Gropius, eds., *Bauhaus* (New York: Abrams, 1938); and Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947).



works. That there is a modern idea which has nothing to do with the different “modern styles.” is something they don’t grasp.<sup>91</sup>

Modern thought, modern design, and modern forms mixed more freely in America than in Europe, where many designs carried ideological implications. In his several other letters, Lönberg-Holm recounted to Oud his struggle to attain an architecture that emphasized the connection between the technological advancements of architecture and its social responsiveness in a country which did not have a clear understanding of the European precedents.

The difficulty that Lönberg-Holm and others who shared his goal faced came partly from the way in which European modernism was viewed in America. In Europe the modernist architects proselytized in avant-garde publications and when possible constructed their conception of the modern spirit in built form. In America, architects first came into contact with European modernism through images of these buildings, or the opinions of critics and historians, in art and architectural journals.<sup>92</sup> Hitchcock, Johnson, and Barr benefited from the prominence given to critics and historians and from their ability to develop a cohesive stylistic analysis of modern architecture that placed Oud in a prominent role.

Before Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson secured Oud’s architecture as an illustration for their International Style Exhibition, his work remained open to interpretation and thus offered an opportunity for other proponents of perspectives to

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91. Knud Lönberg-Holm to J.J.P. Oud, 21 October 1924, File 19, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. For more information on Lönberg-Holm, also see Kentgens-Craig, 48.

use his architecture to illustrate their own ideas. Beginning in the late 1920s, Oud received several offers to lecture in America. This was because students and professors in American architecture schools were becoming increasingly interested in the work of European modernist architects, even though most institutions still adhered to Beaux-Arts design.<sup>93</sup> On the recommendation of Hitchcock, Princeton University asked Oud to deliver a series of lectures at the campus in the spring of 1930. In the spring of 1929, Oud wrote to Princeton tentatively confirming his arrival the following year. By the end of 1929, Oud wrote again to Princeton to say that bad health would prevent him from delivering the lectures as scheduled.<sup>94</sup>

During this same period, Oud also began to arrange a possible lecture/teaching position at the University of Michigan, where his work had been well known for sometime thanks to the efforts of Lönberg-Holm, with whom Oud corresponded frequently.<sup>95</sup> Although in the end he did not go to Michigan either, it is important to note that these two proposals were initiated by contacts who had very different views on the modernist debates in American architecture. Once again, this indicates that Oud's work was attractive to architects who represented many different perspectives of the path for modernism. Oud's failure to visit America, however, had important consequences. It suggested that Oud's poor health might pose a problem for future projects; but more

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92. Daniel Gregory, *Magazine Modern: A Study of the American Architectural Press 1919–1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982), 132, 138. Also see Kentgens-Craig, 40.

93. Bacon, 91. Also see Rosemaire Haag Bletter, "Modernism Rears Its Head—The Twenties and Thirties," in *The Making of an Architect 1881–1981*, ed., Richard Oliver (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 103–10.

94. Princeton to J.J.P. Oud, 22 January 1930, File 61, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

95. Princeton to J.J.P. Oud, 4 January 1929, File 56, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Princeton to J.J.P. Oud, 15 March 1929, File 57, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Princeton to J.J.P. Oud, 28 March 1929, File 57 Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Princeton to J.J.P. Oud, 4 June 1929, File 58, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Also see letters from University of Michigan: Emil Lorch to J.J.P. Oud, 11 October 1929, File 59, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; and J.J.P. Oud to Emil Lorch, 27 November 1929, File 60, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

importantly, Oud's absence left his position in the American movement dependant mainly on the efforts of Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson, and on the success of their exhibition, to give full definition to his work.

At the same time that Hitchcock, Barr and Johnson needed Oud's work as an illustration for their International Style Exhibition, Oud himself was looking for a new job. He had become increasingly frustrated with his position as a city architect. Although this municipal position offered Oud a fairly secure platform from which to apply his theoretical ideas, not many of his recent housing designs had been built.<sup>96</sup> In addition, Oud felt that he had explored the architecture of housing extensively. In a letter to Johnson, he expressed his frustration at having to continue in this field, stating that he hoped to get "better work in Holland than those damned minimum houses of which I am a 'specialist' now."<sup>97</sup> With these thoughts in mind, Oud made the transition to private practice in 1933.

Rather than opening an architectural practice, he worked from his home with two other draftsmen in an effort to maintain full control over his designs.<sup>98</sup> Struggling to attain recognition, Oud eagerly participated in the International Style Exhibition, which served to keep his name alive internationally as a social housing architect, since his housing designs were featured in two sections of the exhibition. At the same time, the exhibition allowed Oud to advertise his work as a private architect through his design of

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96. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 196.

97. J.J.P. Oud to Philip Johnson, 18 January 1932, Museum Archives, MoMA, NY. Also quoted in Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 50.

98. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 382.

a house for Johnson's parents.<sup>99</sup> A higher American profile offered greater international fame, which offered the possibility of a smooth transition to private practice.

### ***Refined Modernism: The Characterization of Oud's Architecture for the International Style Exhibition***

Although Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson all shared a similar process for the stylistic analysis of art, a division of labor had been established through their previous efforts. Barr established the controlling thesis of the exhibitions, Hitchcock contributed the most of the historical analysis, and Johnson promoted the ideas of the other two by capturing them in concise wording.<sup>100</sup> Barr believed that a set of fundamental ideas was needed to bring "the architectural confusion" to an end with the International Style Exhibition.<sup>101</sup> Without specifying whether he was referring to the numerous styles of the nineteenth century or to the American movement's multiple perspectives on modern architecture, Barr expressed his hope that a focused exhibition might cease the "confusion" whether it developed from the outside or from within. His goals were twofold: first, solidify a view of modern architecture within the museum's stylistic terms, and second, by doing so, to develop an influential role for himself and the museum in the modernist architectural debate.<sup>102</sup>

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99. In a letter to his mother written during his European travels, Johnson first expressed his idea that Oud should design a house for his parents: "But I haven't told you about Oud. The dear man is now one of my very good friends. . . Our personalities just fitted and if I thought him a genius from his buildings, I certainly think of him as more of one to be so charming, and friendly. When he comes to America he must visit us. You would love him. And if we ever, ever build, I would have perfect confidence in him even on the other side of the ocean, something which I cannot say of Corbusier." Philip Johnson to Louise Johnson, 21 July 1930, Philip Johnson Papers, Getty Institute, Santa Monica, CA.

100. Johnson would later refer to the division of labor as "Barr coined the phrase, Russell wrote the book and I was the designated screamer-arounder." Riley, *Philip Johnson and MOMA*, 61.

101. Alfred Barr, "foreword," to *Modern Architects*, Henry Russell Hitchcock, et al., 13.

102. *Modern Architects*, 12–17.

To achieve Barr's goals, Johnson, more than either of the others, believed that the International Style Exhibition should be as much about *how* the buildings and their architects were presented as about *what* was presented. In a letter to Oud, he expressed his desire to have the exhibition and its accompanying materials linger like a memorable advertising jingle in the minds of the visitors:

Another purpose of the book and one which I have especially at heart is propaganda for modern architecture in America. . . Of course, a book to be popular must not have such an unreadable text as Hitchcock's last book [*Modern Architecture*], and yet our book must be popular in order to make it worth the while . . . the public will not buy such a book unless there is some catch word such as Eisen un Eisenbeton. In vain do we tell the publishers that it will be the first book to deal with the style as a whole in the world and with nothing but the style. . . what we want is to get out a book that will be widely read<sup>103</sup>

The question of style is prominent in Johnson's letter, but it is unlikely that this word would have seemed problematic to Oud, since the word had already been associated with his architecture in Germany.<sup>104</sup> There was a difference, however, between Johnson's and Oud's conception of style. It lay in the difference between style determined by formal characteristics and style determined by responding to social needs. This distinction was not evident to Oud, yet it determined his American reception into the postwar period.

Johnson did not just have to "sell" the exhibition to potential publishers; he also had to sell it to the board of the newly formed art museum. Even though Barr fully

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103. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 1930, File 64, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

intended that architecture should be a department of the Museum of Modern Art, the concept was still revolutionary to supporters of the museum.<sup>105</sup> In an effort to rally their support, Johnson produced a short pamphlet entitled *Built to Live In*.<sup>106</sup> Instead of giving a detailed account of the organization of the exhibition that did not yet exist, Johnson used Hitchcock's *Modern Architecture* as a historical template to describe a modern aesthetic formed through a combination of functionalism and technological advances. The pamphlet shrewdly presented a progression from the most radical section, "Mass Production—Low Cost," to the more familiar "Art in Modern Architecture," signaling that avant-garde ideas existed in the same "artistic expression" that was seen in other art forms represented in the museum. In the actual exhibition, these concepts were manifested in the thematic categories and the model houses that functioned like sculptural objects, to be assessed for form and shape as much as plan.

In addition to a format that would persuade both the museum board and the visitors, Johnson knew that the exhibition must include the work of distinctive masters, such as might be seen in a typical art exhibition. To achieve this goal, each of Johnson's focus architects played a specific role. Johnson constructed the exhibition around Gropius and Le Corbusier, because American modern architects and some of the general public were familiar with their work. Gropius was known for his leadership of the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier for his theoretical writings. Johnson strengthened the

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104. For example see, Gustav Adolf Platz, *Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit* (Berlin: IM Propyläen, 1927); and Walter Curt Behrendt, *Der Steig des Neuen Baustils* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Dr. Fritz Wedekind & Co., 1927).

105. In 1938, Barr reflected on the achievements of the department that seemed at first to be a radical departure from the goal of promoting modern art: "In my opinion the Architecture Department has exerted a more active, tangible, and salutary influence in its work than any other department of the Museum." Notes for the reorganization committee, Alfred Barr to Stevens, 16 November 1938, Alfred Barr Papers, Museum Archives, MoMA, NY. Also quoted in Kantor, 243.

106. Philip Johnson, *Built to Live In* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1931).

distinctions between Gropius and Le Corbusier by comparing their ideas and forms.<sup>107</sup>

To form a direct connection to European modernism, Frank Lloyd Wright was included, although his work was no longer popular. Only after Lewis Mumford, who organized the housing section of the exhibition, had succeeded in getting Wright to participate, did Johnson have an American example of the integration of European ideas into form.<sup>108</sup>

The distinctions between Mies and Oud were less clear; hence they competed more closely for distinct roles in the presentation of the exhibition. Mies, like Oud, was largely unknown in America, but Johnson was particularly enthusiastic about his work, and about its potential to provide a future path for modern design.<sup>109</sup> Oud clearly stood out from Mies—and all the others—because he had completed more modernist housing complexes than they had. Logically this led to Oud's anointment as a practitioner with unrivaled potential, rather than as a pure form maker like Mies.<sup>110</sup> Having each architect play a specific role allowed the International Style Exhibition to present a series of precise arguments for a diverse European message. Simultaneously, by focusing on formal characteristics, the exhibition argued against American modernist viewpoints that were not stylistically inspired.<sup>111</sup>

The concepts expressed in *Built to Live In* and the idea of a set of modern masters came together in the layout of the exhibition, which was spread across the museum's five galleries. The visitor entered the exhibition through two galleries filled with American projects. These two galleries formed the main axis of movement.

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107. Bacon, 177.

108. Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 60–62.

109. Ibid., 21–23.

110. Richard Guy Wilson, "Introduction," in *Modern Architecture in America: Visions and Revisions*, eds., Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991), 7.

111. Scrivano, 99.

Galleries containing “The Extent of the Modern Movement” and “Housing” flanked this main axis. The exhibition culminated in the last and largest gallery, with models of single-family houses by the focus architects, surrounded by photos of their completed works.<sup>112</sup>

Just before entering this last gallery, the visitor passed a model of Gropius’s Bauhaus Building. Johnson had pushed this model to the periphery of the featured architects gallery because Gropius’s model was of public building. Johnson determined that single-family houses, and models of their designs, appealed both to the wealthy museum board members who might commission a future design, and to the museum visitors, who witnessed in these houses a new version of the American dream.<sup>113</sup> As had been the case with the Rejected Architects Exhibition, each architect in the room received a similar presentation, which implied a unity among the projects despite their design differences.

The significance of the completed projects of the four focus architects was further emphasized when the layout was compared to the American section of the exhibition, which contained no models of single-family houses. Not only did this emphasis lessen the political and social underpinnings of European design seen in housing projects, but also the exclusion of projects like Buckminster Fuller’s “Dymaxion House” (1927) avoided debate about the other strain of modernism that attempted to fuse American ingenuity with modern ideas.<sup>114</sup> In the same vein, despite some personal protests by

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112. Exhibition information from Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 72.

113. Kantor notes that all the American projects were “projected” projects. By placing Oud in the single-family house gallery, Johnson probably hoped to avoid any association between Johnson’s parents’ “sponsorship” of Oud’s unbuilt design and the unbuilt American designs, since Oud was supposed to represent one of several built examples. See Kantor, 299.

114. Bacon, 176.



Wright, a model of his “Mesa House” (1932) was included in the same room as houses by Mies, Le Corbusier, and Oud. This established a connection among the four both explicitly and implicitly, a connection based on their respective attempts to design an “American” form of housing—the freestanding single-family house.

Despite Johnson’s intention to use a model of Oud’s design to highlight his architecture, Oud struggled to complete it. In comparison to the detailed site information that Oud received for the “Kallenbach House” competition in Germany , Johnson gave Oud only cursory specifications for the site and no specifications at all for the design. For a De Stijl Exhibition in Paris in 1925, Oud had refused to complete a model when he was not given specifications for an actual site, revealing the essential nature of practice to his architectural thinking.<sup>115</sup> Now, once again, he placed less importance on the model than on the actual design of the house and waited to construct the model until the plans were completed. In doing so, he came into conflict with Johnson.

Johnson believed that the models, combined with the photographs, were essential to creating a sense of tangible architecture. He even went so far as to threaten to banish Oud from the exhibition if he did not receive his model on time:

Of course my big worry is the model. I should think that if on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November things weren’t going well that we could make a last minute rush at the Hoek van Holland. The thought stabs me that we might have to have a show without you. My director

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115. Oud had encountered a similar situation in 1925, with his design of a model for the Rosenberg De Stijl Exhibition in Paris. As Hans Jaffe writes, “There was no ‘terrain’ to build the house on and Oud was opposed to ‘Utopian building’, which did not start from given facts. . .” Hans Jaffe, *De Stijl, 1917–1931: The Dutch Contribution to Modern Art* (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1956), 166. Also see Troy, 81; Esser, 140.

telegraphed yeste[r]day WE MUST HAVE OUDS MODEL AT ALL COSTS. So yo[u] see how important it is for my head and position to get the model. And I am sure you underestimate the importance of it for yourself. After all consider th[a]t I am propagating really only you and Mies and that if I have t[h]at to propagate with it will help your cause and my campaign no end.<sup>116</sup>

Johnson revealed his own belief that Le Corbusier and Gropius were already so well known that the real challenge of the exhibition was to raise Oud and Mies to a similar status.

Oud eventually completed the model in time for the exhibition and it was displayed on a plinth in a corner of the last gallery, surrounded by photographs of Oud's completed social housing projects. (Figures 21 & 22) The forms of the model of cardboard painted white combined many of the aspects of the International Style, and simple geometric shapes combined with protruding stairs and catwalks gave the model a seductive overall rhythm. Even so, the appearance of social housing projects surrounding a model of a single-family house must have been disconcerting to viewers considering Oud's design.

Johnson attempted to overcome this incongruence between the single-family models and the surrounding photos by employing a combination of traditional and modern concepts of display that gave the photos of the completed projects an aura equal to that of artworks while maintaining their immediacy as present-day design.<sup>117</sup> (Figure 23) Hanging them at eye level, like paintings in a typical MoMA exhibition,

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116. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 8 July 1931, File 66, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. In a 1935 letter, Johnson also expressed a desire to "compete with the A.I.A. on their own country house level"—a factor that also existed for the 1932 exhibition. Philip Johnson to Ernestine Fantal, 15 August 1935, Museum Archives, MoMA, NY.

Johnson instilled the photos with a creative authority through the implicit similarity of display typical museum objects.<sup>118</sup> The photos also presented the viewer with a frieze-like appearance, since their edges were not bordered in white but were wrapped beneath the edge of the frames, removing the formal separation between the real and imagined spaces.

Despite the satisfying immediacy of Johnson's display method, the plan of Oud's design, which protruded from the plinth for the model at a forty-five degree angle, actually weakened Oud's argument for the design. Compared to the other three architects' plans for single-family houses, Oud's plan undermined the model's display of functional parts by revealing the struggle for a total concept. The design illustrated the main floor with two wings of a house that embraced a rear swimming pool and a tennis court, both of which extended beyond the footprint. The rooms unfolded in a diagonal flow of spaces on the main floor that stretched from a square garage at one end, through a kitchen and living space, to the main bedroom overlooking the pool, terminating in a circular sunroom.

The open plan of Oud's house seemed to allude to Wright's work and also maximized the contact between the inhabitants and the staff—something that Americans did not necessarily desire. The plan provided three guestrooms on the lower level that shared a single bath. Oud had stated in a letter to Johnson that he saw this commission as an opportunity to apply ideas about space that he had limited opportunities to apply in his minimal-housing designs.<sup>119</sup>

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117. Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 52.

118. Riley, *Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art*, 42.

119. J.J.P. Oud to Philip Johnson, 12 Nov. 1930, Registrar's Archive, MoMA, New York City. Also see Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 204, no. 19.

Johnson, however, saw the plan as less of a problem than Oud's design for the model. He felt that Oud's model was too plain in its cheap white material, and that this would hurt Oud's chances of receiving future commissions. As I noted earlier, Johnson wrote to Oud after the exhibition, comparing his simple model to Mies' more elaborate one. Not only did the materials differ, but so did the reaction of the public: "I think your house would be as much admired as his [luxurious in its construction], but as it is, the "Tugendhat House" attracts most of the rich people, as might be expected."<sup>120</sup>

Johnson's letter reminded Oud that even though the exhibition presented all of the architects working in a single style, individual architects were still in competition within this framework, and that the presentation of his work created certain expectations on the part of the viewers.

The impact of the exhibition was fairly limited. This was partly because it ran for only about six weeks, and partly because it attracted relatively few visitors—only about 33,000 from 9 February, when it opened, to 23 March, when it closed.<sup>121</sup> Although several people reviewed the exhibition, even Johnson admitted to Oud that the reviews generally followed party lines:

I may safely say that there was not one really critical review of the Exhibition. For the most part the critics either make excerpts from the catalog or if they are constitutionally opposed to modern architecture, they merely remark that the Exhibition displeases them.<sup>122</sup>

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120. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 16 April 1932, File 68, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

121. Schulze, 80.

122. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 17 March 1932, File 68, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. In comparison, 186,000 people (15,000 on the first day) visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "The Architect and the Industrial Arts," which ran from April to early fall of 1929. See Robert Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 338; Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition*

Johnson seems to have been generally correct in his assessment, since most reviews in the general press were either completely skeptical of the idea of an International Style, or, less frequently, argued that the exhibition was not cutting edge enough in its stylistic analysis.<sup>123</sup> H.J. Brock's review in the *New York Times Magazine* captures the skeptical spirit of several articles. Although he complimented the exhibition on its use of models and on its overall presentation, Brock questioned the substance of the premise of the exhibition: "There is a certain logic in the premises if there is rarely, as yet, a convincing art in the practical solutions of given problems of modern housing."<sup>124</sup> A review in the *New York Herald Tribune* showed less tolerance of the overall concept of an International Style, noting that Oud's Rotterdam church "might, from its appearance, be a cinema."<sup>125</sup> Other reviews, such as the one by Douglas Haskell in *The Nation*, argued that the technical aspects of the new architecture offered more opportunity for new design than concentrating on the stylistic aspects.<sup>126</sup>

*Shelter*, the journal that replaced *T-Squared*, published many of these disparate opinions in its April 1932 issue.<sup>127</sup> Under either name, the journal supported debate

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15 and the Museum of Modern Art, 85. In this letter, Johnson may have been referring to the reviews such as that by John Irwin Bright, "Architecture: An 'International' Architecture," *American Magazine of Art* 25, no. 2 (1932): 107–12; and Catherine Bauer, "Exhibition of Modern Architecture at the Museum of Modern Art," *Creative Art* 10, no. 3 (1932): 201–206.

123. Riley argues that the general press even went so far as to ignore the arguments put forth in the exhibition for a new style and concentrated instead on specific aspects of the exhibition, such as the models, or the lack of cellars in the depicted houses. See Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 85–86.

124. Henry Irving Brock, "Architecture Styled 'International,'" *New York Times Magazine*, 7 February 1932, 11.

125. Royal Cortissoz, "Architecture: The Turn It Is Taking under Modernistic Hands," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 February 1932.

126. Douglas Haskell, "Architecture: What the Man about Town Will Build," *Nation*, 13 April 1932, 441–43.

127. Other reviews in trade journals and arts magazines were generally supportive, since many of their authors were either directly involved in the exhibition or closely associated with the organizers. Examples include: Bauer, "Exhibition of Modern Architecture at the Museum of Modern Art,"; Harold Sterner, "Architecture Chronicle: International Architectural Style," *Hound and Horn* 5, no.3 (1932): 452–60;

about contemporary architectural topics, but without the possibility of outside influences on editorial decisions. Because Johnson lent the journal financial support, and Hitchcock and Barr were its editors, they could have used the journal to control debate on the subject of the International Style.<sup>128</sup> Much to their credit, the April issue offered a wide range of criticism of the exhibition, much of which, however, was countered by Hitchcock's opening editorial.

Hitchcock did not defend his aesthetic reading of modernism as the only perspective, but he defended it as a useful one, noting, "It seems possible through aesthetic criticism to bring certain people to an interest in and even a certain understanding of modern architecture that are bored by technicians and sociologists."<sup>129</sup> Hitchcock's defense of an aesthetic reading of architecture did little to blunt the criticism of the architectural community, which, unlike the general press, remained supportive of the modern movement, but critical of Hitchcock and Johnson's analysis.

In his article entitled, "Old New Stuff," Arthur North described the two areas of criticism as "linguistic lingo" and "architectural formulary."<sup>130</sup> North argued that the International Style, like so many modern movements, defined itself through a "mysterious lingo" that gave the concept an air of authority. His sentiments were supported by Chester Aldrich, who observed in his own critique that, "around the modernist movement, there cling two elements which were certainly never more powerful than today—vogue and publicity. Both of these are by their nature

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Kenneth Stowell, "The International Style," *Architectural Forum* 56, no. 3 (March 1932): 253; Ralph Flint, "Present Trends in Architecture in Fine Exhibit," *Art News* 30, (13 February 1932): 5.

128. *Shelter* 2, no. 3 (1932).

129. Henry Russell Hitchcock, "Architectural Criticism," *Shelter* 2, no. 3 (1932): 2.

130. Arthur North, "Old New Stuff," *Shelter* 2, no. 3 (1932): 12-16.

ephemeral.”<sup>131</sup> Like North, Aldrich argued that fine writing was preventing the public from appreciating the new architecture.

Most of the other articles in the issue focused their appraisals, either directly or indirectly, around North’s critique of a style-based analysis. North argued that the “architectural formulary” of the International Style was nothing more than the simplistic combination of certain characteristics into a formula. Oud’s Weissenhof housing was pictured in this section of the article with the caption, “Not much better and no worse than a Baltimore Terrace. How many persons can occupy the balcony at one time and how about bugs and mosquitoes?”<sup>132</sup> North believed that combining a set of stylistic elements did not deliver a functional building.

Knud Lönberg-Holm and Buckminster Fuller joined North in his critique of a style-based analysis with two articles in the same issue, revealing how the exhibition had clarified the confusion in the American movement about which Lönberg-Holm had once written to Oud. Lönberg-Holm’s “Two Shows: A Comment on the Aesthetic Racket” compared the language of Hitchcock and Johnson’s terms of analysis to that of a recent advertisement for a set of new bathroom fixtures. He sarcastically added exclamation points to emphasize sections of his critique of Oud: “Here at last the world could see that a new style existed in which modern methods of construction made possible various things (!!!) which a new aesthetics demanded.”<sup>133</sup> This was the same Lönberg-Holm who had attempted to bring Oud to lecture at Michigan several years earlier, and who now perceived Oud as claimed by the American modernists advocating a modern style. Fuller’s critique was less direct. In his article he described his own architecture,

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131. Chester Aldrich, “Modernism and Publicity,” *Shelter* 2, no. 3 (1932): 24.

132. North, 15.

which had been excluded from the International Style Exhibition, which featured industrial-based design.<sup>134</sup> Rather than attempting to discount these articles, Johnson countered them by continuing to promote the museum's ideas in a smaller traveling version of the International Style Exhibition.

Despite this criticism from his colleagues, and with the intention of spreading the message beyond New York, Johnson redesigned the exhibition to travel across the country. Stopping in fourteen different cities, the exhibition reached not only a much larger audience, but also a more diversified one, because it was often exhibited in department stores.<sup>135</sup> The fact that Johnson set up International Style Exhibition as a traveling show was characteristic of Johnson's attitude towards exhibitions—multifaceted approaches towards exposure.

### ***Repeating the Claim: The International Style Exhibition Catalog***

To understand Oud's position in the exhibition, it is also essential to understand how his work was presented in the catalog, *Modern Architects*, which accompanied the exhibition.<sup>136</sup> The catalog was less a documentation of the exhibition than a complement to the exhibition.<sup>137</sup> Johnson intended the catalog to provide an overview of the movement highlighted by key figures whose distinctive characteristics it would be easy for the reader to grasp. To this end, the catalog presented Oud as less of an

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133. Knud Lönberg-Holm, "Two Shows: A Comment on the Aesthetic Racket," *Shelter* 2, no. 3 (1932): 17.

134. Buckminster Fuller, "Universal Architecture, Essay No. 2," *Shelter* 2, 3 (1932): 30–35.

135. Lynes, 88.

136. *Modern Architects* was the title of the trade version of the catalog. *Modern Architecture—International Exhibition* was the title of the catalog produced exclusively by the museum; it was also the title of the exhibition. The text of the two catalogs is identical. Henry Russell Hitchcock et al., *Modern Architecture—International Exhibition* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932); and Hitchcock et al., *Modern Architects*.

137. Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 9.



innovator than the other featured European architects, and as more of an artist-practitioner—one who modeled the existing modern forms into captivating arrangements.

Johnson followed the general presentation of the exhibition by dividing the catalog into three sections. The first section consisted of three chapters: “Introduction,” “A Historical Note,” and “The Extent of Modern Architecture.” The introduction included a foreword by Barr that gave the terms of the exhibition. The second and third chapters were written mostly by Johnson. The second section was titled “Exhibiting Architects.” It included extended entries by Hitchcock on Wright, Gropius, Le Corbusier, van der Rohe, and Oud followed by shorter entries on the American-based architects Hood, Howe and Lescaze, Neutra, and the Bowman Brothers. The third section was entitled “Housing.” It included an essay by Mumford that focused largely on the social needs fulfilled by housing.

By reproducing the form of the exhibition in a textual format, Johnson reinforced the ideas stated in the exhibition through repetition. Barr noted the power of the exhibition format, and indirectly the power of its replication, in the introduction to the catalog: “Expositions and exhibitions have perhaps changed the character of American architecture of the last forty years more than any other factor.”<sup>138</sup> He followed this pronouncement with his now-familiar list of volume, regularity, and technical perfection with a lack of ornament as the three bases for judging the work of the architects discussed.

Johnson contextualized Barr’s foreword within a brief historical account of modern architecture, followed by an argument for the widespread application of modern

ideas. The historical account appears to have been largely derived from Hitchcock's *Modern Architecture*, though Johnson's version is greatly streamlined. Its importance lies less in its sweeping summary of architectural design from the early nineteenth century to the present day than in Johnson's final assertion that the search for a new style has ended:

Since 1922 the new style has not changed in its fundamentals. Based as it is on modern engineering and on modern provision for function, it went through stages where both these basic conditions were over-emphasized. . . The new style has spread to all parts of the world. Whether it will develop local substyles or change rapidly as the years go by, only the future can tell. In 1932 Mies, Le Corbusier, Oud and Gropius who were the chief pioneers are still the leading modern architects.<sup>139</sup>

In this essay Johnson stated that the terms of the International Style were stable and could be historically analyzed. Johnson was not alone in this belief since many American architects in the 1930s attempted to mine European modernism of the 1920s for its forms rather than using it as inspiration for American design.<sup>140</sup> If the terms of the International Style alone were not compelling, Johnson, together with Hitchcock, argued in "The Extent of Modern Architecture" that the formal qualities of modern architecture were important because they were pervasive.

Rather than examining the full sweep of modern architecture, as he had done in *Modern Architecture*, Hitchcock opened his analysis of Oud by noting that "the best

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138. Alfred Barr, "foreword," to *Modern Architects*, 12.

139. Johnson, "Historical Note," in *Modern Architects*, 20.

140. William Jordy, "The Aftermath of the Bauhaus in America: Gropius, Mies and Breuer," *Perspectives in American History* 2 (1968): 487, 494.

postwar architecture is in Rotterdam,” and that it, and therefore Oud, represented “the center of the modern movement.”<sup>141</sup> His biographical history of Oud’s architectural development suggested, as Hitchcock had suggested elsewhere, that Oud had emerged from many previous architectural influences to develop the elements of a refined modern style. The refinement of Oud’s work was the focus of Hitchcock’s essay and justified the position given to Oud in the exhibition between a modern theorist (as exemplified by Le Corbusier) and that of an inconsistent practitioner (as exemplified by Gropius).<sup>142</sup>

Thus Hitchcock described Oud’s Weissenhof housing in practical terms as “balanced” and as displaying “good sense.”<sup>143</sup> Although these words seem nebulous, Hitchcock gave them definition by elaborating on Oud’s modernist role:

Oud is the most conscientious of modern architects. Both in technical matters and in matters of design, he accomplishes the results less by startling strokes of imagination than by the cumulative process of refinement. In many respects the least drastic innovator among the European leaders he has advanced as does a craftsman by dint of taking infinite pains. With a highly developed critical sense and a vision intellectually clear rather than emotionally stirred, his few vices are negative rather than positive. . . His is the classic genius of understatement, the assurance of inevitable judgment reached by slow and profound study. In any period he would have been a very great architect, in our own he is of all great architects the most sound.<sup>144</sup>

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141. Philip Johnson in *Modern Architects*, 21.

142. *Ibid.*, 20.

143. Hitchcock in *Modern Architects*, 96.

144. *Ibid.*, 97.

Although Hitchcock had given definition to his concept of “good sense,” he had also created an impossible category for Oud to achieve since any deviation from his “inevitable judgment” directly undermined the fundamentals of Oud’s architecture.

Of course Hitchcock’s desire for “the most sound” process of design, was not the provisional “good sense” that Oud advocated for a responsive modernism, but one in which adherence to, and development of, specific formal characteristics was assumed. Oud even wrote to Johnson to object to the repeated emphasis on formal analysis in the catalog, noting that “the text seems to me (as far as I read it) excellent. The school mastering under the illustrations I don’t like.”<sup>145</sup> Despite his protests, this presentation suggested that in the end, the value of Oud’s architecture depended his ability to continue to refine the arrangement of modern forms. Any deviation from MoMA’s expectation that Oud would continue to “refine” his work, called into question his usefulness to support the definition of the International Style. In comparison, the work of a more radical innovator ( Le Corbusier) or prognosticator ( van der Rohe) could be embraced or rejected depending on the perceived validity of the individual work in question.

Like Oud’s design for the exhibition, Oud’s plan for the model of Johnson’s parents’ house presented a challenge to Hitchcock’s notion that Oud was a modern refiner. Although the smooth curves that determined parts of the house could be written off as a “refinement” of Art Nouveau characteristics, Hitchcock wrote that the plan itself defied explanation.<sup>146</sup> He noted that the house fell troublingly between the luxury market and the “working class market”—the former being the unrecognized, but

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145. J.J.P. Oud to Philip Johnson, 6 April 1932, Museum of Modern Art Archives, MoMA, NY. Also see Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 210, no. 49.

intended, audience for the catalog and exhibition. Johnson noted how certain characteristics of the design might contribute to this problem in a letter to Oud following the exhibition:

Your house has caused the greatest interest naturally among those already somewhat familiar with European architecture but the fault unanimously found with it is the lack of bathrooms for the guestrooms. I had thought I told you that in America one needs a bathroom for each guestroom, but perhaps it slipped my mind. In any case American architects have found this fault with the house. Mother on the other hand is delighted with it with [the] exception of having the guestrooms facing north and having only one exposure. As I told you at the time, I was afraid Mother would make this objection. . .<sup>147</sup>

Johnson realized that the expectations of the intended audience had not been met. Although Johnson discounted seemingly insignificant design flaws, it may have been the first warning about the difficult category, which he and Hitchcock had created for Oud. Requiring Oud to hold the position of “refined modernist” gave the movement a sense of historical timelessness, with a set of characteristics that could be continually enhanced, like the classical elements. At the same time, it constrained Oud’s architecture, more than that of the other three featured architects, to respond to the terms that Hitchcock and Johnson used to describe the movement.

Hitchcock and Johnson’s insistence that Oud had adhered to stylistic purity was therefore undermined in the final section of the catalog, in which Lewis Mumford included Oud’s housing in his discussion of social housing. Mumford and the social

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146. Hitchcock in *Modern Architects*, 97.

147. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 17 March 1932, File 68, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

perspective on modern architecture received a voice in the exhibition and the catalog largely because Mumford was able to secure the participation of Wright.<sup>148</sup> Although Johnson made every effort to lessen the impact of Mumford's analysis, the appearance of Oud's architecture in Mumford's section of the exhibition and catalog damaged Johnson's desire to establish a modernism based on style alone, and led readers to ask what should be expected from Oud's architecture.

With some help from the housing advocate Catherine Bauer (1905–1964), “health” and “community,” rather than “form” and “style,” became touchstones in Mumford's analysis of Oud's work.<sup>149</sup> Mumford acknowledged Hitchcock and Johnson's stylistic analysis, but he concentrated on Oud's economical design, and on his ability to offer high-quality housing to the working class:

Oud's little community, designed to meet minimal conditions, trimmed to the last degree of Dutch economy, is among the finest products of the disciplined imagination in modern architecture.<sup>150</sup>

Rather than emphasizing the form of the building, Mumford viewed Oud's design as a result of the terms of modern conditions. This idea of a response to modern conditions expressed most closely Oud's own conception of his style as bound to process.

Mumford also emphasized how Oud's design fit into a larger narrative— a narrative

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148. Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 26–27.

149. Mumford was both mentor and lover to Catherine Bauer. Bauer worked with Mumford to advocate decent housing for all. She became interested in European housing models through her education at Vassar and Cornell, and through her travels to Europe. Her increasing interest in this subject led her to write *Modern Housing*, a book about modernist housing (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934). The publication of this book made her a leading figure on housing issues. For more information on Bauer, see H. Peter Oberlander and Eva Newbrun, *Houser: The Life and Work of Catherine Bauer* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

about the effort across Europe to deliver high-quality housing to an underserved part of the community.

The social perspective of Mumford's presentation is also apparent in the bibliography that followed his analysis. Not only is this bibliography more than three times as long as any other bibliography in the catalog, but it also reflects a philosophical divergence from Hitchcock and Johnson. A stylistic analysis only required the reader to look at the images and analyze them, whereas Mumford drew on many previous analyses to strengthen his argument that modern housing must serve the needs of its inhabitants.

In the short term, the conglomeration of the two perspectives—stylistic and social—would catapult Oud's name to new heights of recognition in American architectural circles. In the long term, the conflict between the two views of Oud meant that Johnson would have in the future to work harder to eliminate any ambiguity in America's interpretation of Oud's work.

### ***The Book: Imbedding Oud in an Argument***

The final part of the International Style Exhibition consisted of a book written by Johnson and Hitchcock and entitled *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*.<sup>151</sup> Although a book might seem to duplicate the contents of the catalog, it served a different purpose in many ways. The catalog had been a result of the exhibition, Johnson had intended to write this book and so it served as an inspiration for the exhibition. As I mentioned before, as early as his first trip to Europe Johnson had

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150. Lewis Mumford, "Housing" in *Modern Architects*, 188.

151. Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Modern Architecture Since*

intended to write a book that covered the new movement in architecture in a style similar to that of several European texts—ones that combined a few pages of text with a profusion of images.<sup>152</sup> Since the exhibition and the catalog appeared before the book, Johnson used them to refine his presentation of a formal analysis of modern architecture, and focus it around a single term: “the International Style.”<sup>153</sup>

The first step was to eliminate any discrepancies between a stylistic analysis and a social analysis that might weaken Johnson’s message. This led to the removal of Mumford’s housing text from the catalog, along with the accompanying photos. By removing any social content from the analysis of the architecture, Johnson provided a focused platform for Hitchcock’s stylistic analysis of the modern movement. The attempt to claim Oud was effected partly by exclusion, rather than by persuasive argument. Johnson attempted to create a seductive formula by combining historical aspects of Hitchcock’s more cumbersome analysis in *Modern Architecture* with a simplified presentation. Finally, the book helped to spread the message of the exhibition to far more people than the limited audience that had actually visited the show.

It is difficult to determine what each of the individual authors contributed to the main text, though Johnson and Hitchcock had already established certain tendencies in their respective approaches to architectural history, and these tendencies can be assumed to be reflected in the text. Johnson credited Hitchcock with writing most of the text, but its more terse style than *Modern Architecture* surely resulted from Johnson’s

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1922 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932).

152. Schulze, 52.

153. Ibid., 60–61; and Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 33.



input, since he noted that the text had been “translated from Hitchcockian” to its final form.<sup>154</sup>

Johnson’s contribution was to highlight the terms of Hitchcock’s writing, which made use of history, observation, and opinion to analyze modern forms. Instead of attempting to explicate Hitchcock’s opinions, Johnson made sure that the book had a uniform presentation, much as he had done with the exhibition. His efforts centered not so much on making each analysis similar, as on codifying the *terms* with respect to the analysis, so that the power of repetition could work as forcefully as the power of Hitchcock’s authoritative opinions.<sup>155</sup>

In the book, Hitchcock and Johnson integrated the organization and ideas of the exhibition and catalog into a single seamless argument. Once again, Alfred Barr in the introduction to the book described the now familiar terms of the International Style—terms that Hitchcock and Johnson would expand upon in the main text. The works of Oud, Gropius, Mies, and Le Corbusier were used to illustrate each principle (architecture as volume, regularity, and avoidance of decoration). Together, these principles formed a single idea. “The idea of style” the co-authors argued, “has become real and fertile again. Today a single new style has come into existence.”<sup>156</sup>

Within the book’s terms of the International Style, Oud again played the role of the refiner who sought to find the best combination of the principles in question. For example, Oud’s architecture could spring from stripped down, De Stijl-inspired

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154. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 1930, File 64, Oud J-B, Oud Archive; Schultz, 61; and Kantor, 297. Barr may have also encouraged an editing of the text since he had reviewed Hitchcock’s *Modern Architecture* as too academic in style. Alfred Barr, Jr., “Modern Architecture,” *Hound and Horn* 3, no. 3 (1930): 431–35.

155. Robert Benson, “Douglas Haskell and the Criticism of International Modernism,” in Wilson and Robinson, 167.

156. Hitchcock and Johnson, 19.

aesthetics and combine this idea with “curves not seen in other modernists,” through a deliberate process of development leading to his final forms. The ability to refine became Hitchcock’s description of Oud as, “the most sound,” which reinforced Barr’s comment in the introduction that Oud had “the most sensitive and disciplined taste.” Again, Oud’s architecture was understood for its ability to master the existing terms, rather than for its ability to introduce new ones. Oud was expected to follow a trajectory where his architecture became “increasingly simple, vigorous and geometrical”—a trajectory limited only by his ability to refine.<sup>157</sup>

If Hitchcock produced most of the text, the section of photos, which followed the text, was where Johnson played his greatest role in shaping the vision of the International Style. Johnson knew that the appearance of the buildings had as much of a lasting effect as any term that either Barr or Hitchcock could create, noting at one point that a building did not really exist until it was photographed and published.<sup>158</sup> Especially when he and Hitchcock were attempting to sway the opinion of a skeptical American public, images of completed buildings were essential. The book included a series of photos of individual projects by each of the four European focus architects. Each series was accompanied by a wide range of photos of individual projects by architects from other countries who worked in a similar style. Variation in design could be seen in these photos, but the text that promoted a single new style tended to minimize these deviations from the terms of the International Style.

Rather than using each architect to illustrate a single principle, Hitchcock and Johnson illustrated several principles with various projects by different architects. They

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157. Ibid., 45.

158. Wilson and Robinson, xiv.

also used several projects by a single architect to illustrate more than one concept. For example, they used three of Oud's buildings (the Weissenhof housing, Hoek van Holland, and the Kiefhoek housing) to illustrate all three of their principles. Although Oud had only housing projects represented in the photo section, Johnson and Hitchcock did not include the housing in the brief text section, "Siedlung," that discussed modern designs for social housing. By removing Oud's architecture from any association with social concerns, they eliminated from their discussion any concern for the provisional nature of Oud's modernism.

### ***The Aftermath of the Exhibition: Oud's Choices***

Following the International Style Exhibition, Philip Johnson wrote Oud a letter in which he described Oud's position in the American modernist architectural movement, claiming it was now an elevated one:

Both of your books, the Bauhaus one and the one by Hitchcock, are on display at the Exhibition, and the Hitchcock book especially is selling extraordinarily well for America. . . . An influential architectural school in Pittsburgh wishes to turn over a new leaf and teach real architecture. They have just realized that this architecture cannot be reconciled with the present curriculum. I have advised them to try to get you to come there at a princely salary to work with the young men and start the new spirit going. I feel that once you are over here we could do much more than at this great distance and will keep you informed of any developments.<sup>159</sup>

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159. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 17 March 1932, File 68, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

Johnson's attempt to secure Oud a teaching job suggests that he wanted the visual and textual invasion of European modernism to follow its logical course, with the arrival of the European masters in America. Oud received other invitations to come to America immediately following the exhibition, though, these invitations differed from Johnson's offer in several respects. Johnson had the background knowledge and the ability to quickly promote Oud's architecture. In addition, he worked for an institution that was interested in continuing to define the terms of American modernism.

Throughout the discussions following the exhibition, Oud was making a transition from his position as city architect to private practice, and this, in addition to some health problems strengthened his desire to stay in the Netherlands and establish himself.<sup>160</sup> He had not forgotten the Rotterdam Bourse debacle, and the inability of international architects to swing the opinion of the selection committee. This, too, made him want to remain in the Netherlands to continue designing, rather than to promote his own fame abroad. The impact of Oud's decision was magnified by the fact that two of the other featured architects—Gropius and Mies—both took teaching positions in America by the end of the 1930s, highlighting Oud's absence from architectural debates in America prior World War II.

Immediately following the International Style Exhibition, Johnson's efforts to bring Oud, and as many of his other featured architects as possible to America, began in earnest. If the models in combination with the photographs piqued visitor interest, then the architects in person might sway doubters with their distinct personalities and convincing words. In addition, any successes attained by these architects would increase the status of the institutions and individuals that supported them. With this in

mind, Johnson wrote Oud to ask under what conditions he would come to America to teach at Columbia and lecture at the Museum of Modern Art—and also noted that he constantly recommended Oud to clients for their projects.<sup>161</sup>

Johnson knew that Joseph Hudnut, the dean of Columbia's architecture school and a friend of Alfred Barr, was making efforts to bring Oud to America and thought the museum could work in conjunction with these efforts. Joseph Hudnut wanted to organize a series of lectures by European modernists at American architecture schools, and Oud headed his list of candidates. Hudnut's perspective on modernism had been shaped by his work with Walter Hegemann (1881–1936), the well-known German city planner, with whom Hudnut had worked during Hegemann's years in America. Hegemann had impressed upon Hudnut the idea that the city was the basis for planning, and that it was “a living and growing organism” that had no predetermined form.<sup>162</sup> These ideas, along with Hudnut's desire to promote modernism at Columbia, made Oud his top candidate. Oud, however, was not attracted by the rather meager offer of a \$200 honorarium per lecture plus expenses, especially if it meant time away from his fledgling practice in the Netherlands.<sup>163</sup>

The fact that his practice was in a state of transition played an essential role in any decision that Oud made during this time. Having only recently left his post as a municipal architect for Rotterdam, he had begun his own practice in 1933. In a letter to Johnson following the offer from Hudnut, Oud expressed his reluctance to leave the

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160. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 365–66; and Langmead 17–18.

161. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 16 April 1932, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

162. Jill Pearlman, “Joseph Hudnut's Other Modernism at the ‘Harvard Bauhaus,’” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56, no. 4 (1997): 453–54.

163. Bacon, 28.

Netherlands for a trip that would take him away from any chance of design work in exchange for teaching without much compensation:

What [sic] about the business you wrote me about? I am not a man for teaching and also [at such] a “princely salary.” I like the real work of “building” and only if I could get building—possibilities [sic] by it I should think a bit of teaching—a little. Naturally it would be another question to work a month or so with students on projects. But lecturing as a rule in schools and so [forth] –Brrr!<sup>164</sup>

Oud weighed teaching against income-producing design and the importance of remaining a leading architect in the Netherlands through production. Oud’s commitment to his practice triumphed over teaching and he remained in the Netherlands.

Nevertheless, Johnson continued his efforts to bring Oud to America as illustrated in a letter written towards the end of 1933, in which he noted that “within architecture schools, your name is known the best and without exception”—though he offered no proof other than the power of his own opinion.<sup>165</sup> Oud responded to Johnson’s implied request that he visit America by arguing that it might be too difficult a trip physically, and also that he did not want to be distracted from his work.<sup>166</sup>

The subject of work, or lack thereof, appeared in both of Oud’s letters to Johnson, and was a major reason for his remaining in the Netherlands. Due to difficult economic conditions, Oud struggled to find work for his new practice and turned to

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164. J.J.P. Oud to Philip Johnson, 3 May 1932, Museum Archives, MoMA, N.Y. Also quoted in Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art*, 205, no. 39.

165. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 23 November 1933, File 71, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

166. J.J.P. Oud to Philip Johnson, 11 December 1933, File 71, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

several interior design projects and furniture design.<sup>167</sup> Oud had not forgotten that building and lecturing in Germany had failed to help him in the Rotterdam Bourse competition, and he would not make the same mistake twice. He had not yet designed a prominent building in the Netherlands, and to do so was still the goal of his practice.

Oud's rejection of Hudnut's offer damaged his standing at MoMA even more than he realized, since Hudnut hired Jan Ruthenberg, a Swedish modernist, to serve on the faculty at Columbia along with his American assistant, William Turk Priestley. Priestley had spent a year studying under the guidance of Mies at the Bauhaus and only returned to America when the Bauhaus closed in July 1933. Johnson, familiar with the work of Mies, and viewing Priestley as an American indoctrinated with the formal characteristics of the European style, immediately organized a small one-man show for Priestley. Tellingly, the exhibition was titled *Project for a House in North Carolina*.<sup>168</sup> The gap, in Philip Johnson's eyes, left by Oud's absence had quickly been filled by a younger disciple of Oud's main competitor for future modern design, Mies van der Rohe. Priestley would subsequently enroll at Columbia and study under Hudnut, whose curriculum would place an increasing emphasis on modern design.

Six months later, at the beginning of 1935, Oud again recounted to a number of correspondents his reasons for remaining in the Netherlands. In a letter to Barr, Oud noted that he still was waiting to build his "cathedral" in the Netherlands, a seeming reference to Gropius's comments some ten years before.<sup>169</sup> This letter echoed another

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167. Examples of these projects include several interior designs, such as the one for Dr. D. Hannema (1934, 1937) and public interiors such as that of the SS *Nieuw Amsterdam* (1936–1938). Much of Oud's furniture design was for Metz & Co., an upscale Dutch department store (1933–1934). For more information on projects from this period, see Taverne, Wagenaar, and De Vletter, 374–404.

168. McAtee, 142–3.

169. J.J.P. Oud to Alfred Barr, 21 January 1935, File 76, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

written by Oud to Fredrick Kiesler, a European architect living in America, in which he clearly stated his reasons for remaining in the Netherlands: “at my age one better does not change for trying to find his fortune in USA.”<sup>170</sup> These letters reveal that Oud’s interest in the American movement was secondary to his position in the Dutch movement—not surprising, since his fame at home depended partly on his international standing.

Notwithstanding Oud’s clear desire to strengthen his position at home, Barr, Johnson, and Hitchcock continued to offer him seductive reasons to visit the States. The most organized effort to bring Oud to America following the MoMA Exhibition was made by Barr and Hudnut, the newly appointed dean of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design. As I mentioned earlier, these two figures had previously joined forces to attempt to bring Oud to America, and Barr encouraged Hudnut to invite Oud again in an effort to transform the curriculum by introducing modern planning and design.<sup>171</sup> Oud still appealed to Hudnut, since unlike Gropius, he did not already have a system for teaching, nor did he seem too functionalist to Hudnut, unlike his other competitor, Mies van der Rohe.<sup>172</sup>

Barr, for his part, wanted a European architect to collaborate with Philip Goodwin on the design of the new building for MoMA. Even though Gropius and Mies had originally been the two leading candidates for this job, Hitchcock and Barr convinced other members of the search committee that Oud should be included on the list of

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170. J.J.P. Oud to Frederick Kiesler, 19 September 1934, File 74, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

171. Pearlman, 463. Also see Anthony Alofsin, *The Struggle for Modernism: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and City Planning at Harvard* (New York: Norton & Co., 2002), 132–33.

172. Pearlman gives a good overview of Hudnut’s views of modernism and of his early work with Walter Heggmann—two factors that might have made Hudnut lean towards Oud as a first choice. Pearlman, 452–63.



candidates.<sup>173</sup> Barr left for Europe in the summer of 1936 to solicit the three architects' interest in both projects. Oud, however, expressed little desire to teach, citing his lack of experience. And, as he wrote to Barr, his commitment to other projects—such as his design for the Amsterdam Town Hall (1936–1937)—meant that he must wait some time before beginning the design for MoMA.

Barr summed up these sentiments in a letter to Goodwin, noting, "I saw Oud in Rotterdam but he was not interested in teaching and did not think he would be free to work on the Museum until the end of 1937. Besides, he did not want to leave Holland where his position as prophet in his own country is rapidly improving."<sup>174</sup> Oud expressed the very same sentiments in a letter to Hudnut shortly after Barr's visit, commenting that "I can do better by participating in the process of building itself than by lecturing a.s.o [and so on] on it. In my opinion, one is either born a Professor or an Architect and in the latter case one must not go too much aside the paths of real building-work. Your plans would had [sic] me too far away from what I mean to be my vocation."<sup>175</sup> As if to reassure Hudnut that this was his true reason, he also noted the good state of his current health which had been an issue affecting his earlier invitations from Princeton.

Although Oud received one other prewar offer to lecture in America, his role in the American movement was soon marginalized by his lack of participation, and therefore his perceived historical importance in the period immediately following the exhibition. But, as shown, the combination of this series of invitations for Oud to come

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173. Rona Robb, "1936: The Museum Selects an Architect," *Archives of American Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (1983): 23–28.

174. Alfred Barr to Philip Goodwin, 6 July 1936, Museum Archives, MoMA, NY.

175. J.J.P. Oud to Joseph Hudnut, 31 July 1936, File 87, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

to America, and the presentation of many of the opportunities before Gropius, Mies, or Le Corbusier, reveals that—contrary to previous accounts—Oud garnered the most attention from the promoters of the International Style immediately following the exhibition.<sup>176</sup> Since reviews of the International Style Exhibition avoided naming a “winner”—though Mies’ house was singled out for particular praise in several instances—the critics attempting to bring Oud to America exerted even more influence.<sup>177</sup> When Oud turned down the offers of Johnson, Barr, and Hudnut, they turned to the Mies, Gropius, and Le Corbusier. While Le Corbusier, who arrived in America in 1935 for a series of lectures; Gropius, who took the position at Harvard; and Mies, who subsequently began teaching at the Illinois Institute of Technology; became prominent in the modernist American movement and in its internationalization, Oud’s position remained associated with the International Style Exhibition.

In contrast to the others who arrived in America, Oud remained in the Netherlands and in 1937 began the design of the Head Office of the Bataafsche Import Maatschappij (Shell Building) (1939–1942) in The Hague. This building remained largely unknown outside the Netherlands until the end of the war, and therefore, had no effect on Oud’s international reception in the 1930s. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the shift in the reception of modern architecture in America that was

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176. For example, Bacon argues that Le Corbusier is a major influence before the International Style Exhibition and that the lecture tour three years later argues for his continued prominence. McAtee, on the otherhand, claims that Mies was the winner of the exhibition since he gained a new status not he did not have in Hitchcock’s *Modern Architecture*. See Bacon, McAtee.

177. Harold Sterner was the only review to decisively name Mies “the most distinguished in the exhibition,” and also noted that Le Corbusier was a master of writing, but was mastered by the forms. Catherine Bauer’s review is more representative, though, of the general balanced tone of the reviews when she comments that Mies’ house is “one of the most beautiful modern buildings in existence,” but she also states that Oud’s Hoek van Holland housing is “probably the most eye-gratifying work which modern architecture has produced.” See Bauer, “Exhibition of Modern Architecture at the Museum of Modern Art,” 5–6; Sterner, “Architecture Chronicle: International Architectural Style,” 455.

occurring as he created his design. The “confusion” that Lönberg-Holm had written about to Oud in the mid-twenties still existed, but in a different way. It was no longer a misunderstanding that allowed socially inspired designs to be folded into the stylistically driven International Style. Rather, the International Style now encouraged architects to adhere to a set of criteria, and debates surrounded whether architects were successful or not in adhering to them. In addition, American architects, who adhered to a stylistic analysis of modernist architecture searched for a means to advance the idea in their own terms, but struggled to do so within the limited options.

Hitchcock admitted as much in 1937 in “The Architectural Future in America.” Although he wished for an integration of “all that is not specifically European in the International Style” with “all that is not revivalist eclecticism in existing American architecture,” Hitchcock argued that a turning point had come for the integration of modern ideas with their precursors.<sup>178</sup> “The time is past for always cheering one’s own team. Although the opportunities for critical comment in America are very few, in such critical comment as can be made we should not fear to criticize negatively the work of those who rate as most advanced, nor to praise sincerely such occasional excellences as there may be in the work of men who remain half traditional, half modern. This is no longer treason.”<sup>179</sup> The question that would be answered after the war was whether it was treason for a European modernist such as Oud to seek answers in classical forms—since classical forms were the choice of wartime totalitarian regimes—or whether this option was only for struggling Americans.

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178. Henry Russell Hitchcock, “The Architectural Future in America,” *Architectural Review* 82 (July 1937): 2.

179. *Ibid.*, 2.

At the same time as Hitchcock offered the possibility of expanding the terms of modernism, Sigfried Giedion saw little opportunity to do so. In 1938, Gropius invited Giedion to Harvard to deliver a series of lectures that would eventually be published as the famous *Space, Time, and Architecture*.<sup>180</sup> Although Giedion did not subscribe to the terms of the International Style, his analysis also connected not just technical advances, but also the formal characteristics of the modernist architectural movement, with the modern spirit—rejecting any return to classically inspired forms.

In fact, Giedion's stand against a return to classical forms had a direct impact on Oud's design. Giedion had seen Oud's plans for the Shell Building, which revealed a centrally planned structure with clear axes and the reintroduction of some ornament, and expressed his displeasure in a letter to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy saying, "He [Oud] is on a dangerous path of reaction."<sup>181</sup> Although he did not offer a direct critique of Oud's Shell Building in "The Dangers and Advantages of Luxury," the implied message was clear. In this essay, Giedion noted that new subversive tendencies had appeared in Europe: "In Holland, too, there is a circle of young architects, some of whom have been taught by Le Corbusier, who will soon demonstrate by executed buildings that they think the time has come to embellish buildings by introducing stylistic details (cornices, friezes, Greek orders) . . . They asked again for 'beauty.' Why not the beauty of traditional detail?"<sup>182</sup> Oud was not directly mentioned, but Giedion mentioned the consequences of this turn in modernism: "If it happens by reaction, as in America in

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180. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard University Press, 1941).

181. Sigfried Giedion to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 29 July 1938, GTA, Zurich. Also see Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 410.

182. Sigfried Giedion, "The Dangers and Advantages of Luxury," *Focus* 1, no. 3 (1939): 38.

1893, the result will be the same—the elimination of creative forces—and the development will become meretricious.”<sup>183</sup>

Oud’s effort to respond to modern needs with an architecture that looked to classicism, with its restrained ornament and timeless orders, as a guide to presenting modernism on a monumental scale was unacceptable to Giedion. Hitchcock and Giedion represented the formative positions for the wartime debates in America about the future of a modernism based on style. Oud, who had effectively removed himself from these debates, would face the consequences of their shifting expectations when he attempted to reclaim the position of an able practitioner with the presentation of his Shell Building following the war.

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183. *Ibid.*, 38.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Postwar Oud: In Defense of Provisional Modernism**

The reception of the Shell Building immediately following World War II highlighted differences between the American and Dutch movements that would adversely affect Oud's international reception for the remainder of his career. Several previous studies have used the Shell Building as a starting point to investigate Oud's postwar career, but none has discussed how the prewar expectations for his architecture influenced his postwar reception.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I investigate these expectations by comparing Oud's prominence in the Dutch and American postwar modernist movements; by describing his attempts to advance his provisional modernism in each movement; and by suggesting why those attempts undermined his international reception while maintaining his elevated position in the Netherlands.

The difference between the Dutch and the American postwar reception of Oud's work was foreshadowed in Giedion's prewar comments about the useless reintroduction of ornament by Dutch modernists. But the schism between the Dutch understanding of modernism and the American understanding of it became apparent in 1946 when Oud first attempted to publish his Shell Building internationally. The Shell Building had been warmly received by the Dutch press before the war. Its survival and its subsequent restoration (1946–1948) from wartime damage encouraged Oud to seek its international publication. At this time, international publication meant publication in the English language, since many European architects had joined Gropius and Mies in further internationalizing the American modernist movement. But rather than turning to these

European colleagues, Oud sought the assistance of his American supporters—especially Johnson, who had promoted his architecture before the war because he admired the power of its formal qualities.

It was these same formal qualities—volume, regularity, and lack of ornament—that became a point of contention in the postwar period, putting Oud on the defensive. Johnson and other international critics were critical of the building since they believed its form and detailing fell outside of the definition of modernism. Oud was surprised by the reception of his Shell Building in the internationalized modern American movement, since the restoration of his design had been positively received in Holland, where he still held a leading position in postwar architectural debates. In these debates, Oud's provisional modernism represented a unique position midway between the conservative advocates, who wanted reconstruction in traditional styles, and the functionalists, who argued that the best design was the most functional design. Oud was able to hold this in-between position thanks partly to the respect that his prewar work still commanded. But to do so, he was obliged to publish a constant stream of essays explaining in what way his modernism was still provisional and distinct from other Dutch attempts to advance modern design.

Oud did not hold the same elevated position in the internationalized American movement. Without this status, he struggled to have his ideas published. But publish he must; if he wished to realize his vision for a postwar provisional modernism. The articles he did manage to get published did not promote his idea of merging theory and constructive reality, so much as they offered a continual defense of his design of the

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1. See Broekhuizen, *De Stijl toen / J.J.P. Oud nu*; Taverne and Broekhuizen, *Het shell gebouw van J.J.P. Oud: ontwerp en receptie*/J.J.P. Oud's Shell Building: Design and Reception.

Shell Building. The shift in tone from his confident prewar mixture of history and his design philosophy to this new defensive stance—arguing against other people's criticisms of his work by revealing a connection between his prewar and postwar theories—made his Shell Building seem even more outdated than if it was presented independent of his prewar designs. Discussions in America about the role of modernism and the issue of monumentality—discussions in which Oud did not take part—further contributed to his marginalization.

Unable to publish enough internationally to defend himself, Oud turned to exhibitions to reconnect with the fundamentals of his provisional modernism. All three of the exhibitions presented Oud as an architect who carried his vision beyond the Dutch borders. The first was a retrospective on his career that emphasized his prewar work; the second, a De Stijl exhibition that described Oud's role in this internationally important movement; and the third, an exhibition on Frank Lloyd Wright for which Oud designed its display and wrote the catalog essay. But the exhibitions were largely ignored outside of the Netherlands. In America, Oud's decision to emphasize his prewar vision did not have the desired effect of presenting him as a consistent innovator. Rather it reaffirmed his close connection to the prewar period. It was in the postwar period that Oud faced the reality of the differences between the critics' expectations for his architecture in Holland and in America. These differences had developed before the war, but they influenced the postwar reception of Oud's work; and they led the American modern movement to discount Oud's attempt to continue to argue for a provisional modernism.



## The Shell Building and Oud's Position in the Postwar Dutch Modernist Movement

The survival of Oud's Shell Building and its reconstruction immediately following the war brought his work to the attention of postwar critics within the Netherlands. Critical debate surrounding the building made it a focus for discussions of the future direction of Dutch modern design. Even before the war, many critics and architects, writing in professional journals and the national press, had promoted the Shell Building as a concrete example of an architecture that could expand the ideas of the 1920s by combining undecorated forms with expressive detailing.<sup>2</sup> The war years had witnessed a broad dialogue in an effort to discover new paths for architecture between functionalists and architects who advocated traditional forms.<sup>3</sup> Having survived the war largely intact, the Shell Building served as a focus point for these discussions—discussions that took on new urgency with so much urban space to reconstruct. The reputation of the Shell Building increased during this time, since it appeared to represent a balance between conservative traditionally styled reconstruction and radical functional reconstruction.

Oud's design represented a compromise in its forms, since it responded to the strict design parameters imposed by the Shell Company's desire to merge corporate power with contemporary architecture. Shell had wanted "a conspicuously large office building . . . a dignified yet unambiguous advertisement for 'Shell,' [a building that would] incorporate an eye-catching illuminated sign for 'Shell' without in any way

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2. H.G. van Gelder, "Ontwerpen voor het nieuwe gebouw der Bataafsche Import Maatschappij in Den haag," *Elseviers Maandschrift* 97 (1939): 353–54; Arthur Staal, "Het gebouw der B.I.M.," *Telegraaf*, 13 June 1941, 3.

3. Jeron Schilt, "1947–1957: Ten years of 'Opbouw'" in *Het Nieuwe Bouwen in Rotterdam, 1920-1960*, ed., W.A.L. Beeren and Rob Dettingmeijer (Delft: Delft University Press, 1982), 140.

allowing this to diminish, in a more or less banal fashion, the architecture of the whole.”<sup>4</sup>

In his attempt to balance these goals, Oud chose to test the expressive possibilities of modernism (Figures 24 & 25).<sup>5</sup> Although Oud did not include the illuminated sign in his final design, he did add other types of ornamentation to the otherwise stark façade. In so doing, he seemed to challenge previous modernist ideas, including his own, about the usefulness of decoration.

Decoration, in the form of precast-concrete abstract shell-shaped designs or decorative brickwork, accented several parts of the building, including the lintel over the main entrance, the central stairway, and canopy supports on the roof deck. Otherwise, Oud developed a fairly conservative design within the constraints of the predetermined floor heights and window placements of a six-story building with a symmetrical plan around a central entrance. A lower-story rear wing provided some additional office space and the possibility of a link to a future building planned to mirror the already constructed six-story portion. A canteen with a rounded seating area and decorative brickwork also protruded from one side of the rear wing overlooking a landscaped garden. The Shell Company responded enthusiastically to his design, and Oud began construction in 1939, but he did not achieve his overall design concept until the building was restored after the war.

The design of the Shell Building negotiated a position among the Dutch prewar ideas in modern architecture represented respectively by the architectural groups De 8 (1927–1943), Opbouw (1920–1940), and Groep '32 (1932–1943). In 1932, these

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4. Programma van eisen, 7 December 1937, dossier bouwbureau BIM 188-D, no. 26, 27, 28, Shell Archive, The Hague, 5. Cited in Taverne and Broekhuizen, *Het shell gebouw van J.J.P. Oud: ontwerp en receptie/J.J.P. Oud's Shell Building: Design and Reception*, 13.

5. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 411.

groups joined forces to publish *De 8 en Opbouw* (1932–1943), which replaced *i10* as the Dutch journal of modern architectural ideas. *De 8* had actually published its own original manifesto in *i10*, stating, “It is quite possible to build beautifully, but for the time being it is better to build something ugly and functional than to erect façade architecture to front inferior floor plans.”<sup>6</sup> *Opbouw*—which had originally included a wide range of architectural perspectives—merged with *De 8* in 1940. Groep '32 emerged from the organizers of *De 8 en Opbouw* to challenge tired functionalist thinking by introducing classically inspired ornament as a possible avenue for a more dynamic modernism.<sup>7</sup> Although he was an early member of *Opbouw*, Oud maintained his tendency to avoid close relationships with group organizations and resigned when the group became too functionalist in his view. Although Oud was an infrequent contributor to *De 8 en Opbouw*, his articles aligned him more closely with the position of Groep '32 than with that of *Opbouw*.<sup>8</sup> Oud's design for the Shell Building seemed to prove that modern architecture could function symbolically on a monumental scale with the addition of ornament, without the architect needing to abandon the structural principles of modernism.

In one of the earliest reviews, Arthur Staal, the leader of Groep '32, established the Dutch postwar reading of Oud's building as “Vruchtbare Vooruitgang” (Fruitful

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6. Acht, de. “De meening van ‘de 8’ over de tentonstelling eindproject Hooger-Bouwkunst-Onderwijs (H.B.O.),” *i10* 1, no. 4 (1927): 126.

7. Manfred Bock, “De 8 en Opbouw” in *De 8 en Opbouw*, ed., Manfred Bock (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1985), 40; Manfred Bock, “Inleiding” *Van het Nieuwe Bouwen naar een Nieuwe Architectuur* (’s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1983), 13–15. And see Jan Derwig and Erik Mattie, *Functionalism in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Architectura and Natura Press, 1995), 16.

8. J.J.P. Oud, “De ‘Nieuwe Zakelijkheid’ in de bouwkunst,” *De 8 en Opbouw* 3 (1932): 223–28; J.J.P. Oud, “Ontwerp voor een huis in Pinehurst (USA),” *De 8 en Opbouw* 3 (1932): 229; J.J.P. Oud, “Waarom schoonheidscommissies?” *De 8 en Opbouw* 4 (1933): 73; J.J.P. Oud, “Ik dacht zoo: over Jan Jans en zijn oordeel,” *De 8 en Opbouw* 5 (1934): 140; J.J.P. Oud, “Bij de dood van Leen van der Vlugt,” *De 8 en Opbouw* 7 (1936): 112; J.J.P. Oud, “Mies van der Rohe,” *De 8 en Opbouw* 7 (1936) 71–72.

Progress).<sup>9</sup> In this article, Staal described Oud's prominent position in the international architecture scene before the war and argued that his Shell Building balanced a concern for the function of the building and traditionally Dutch design characteristics. Oud, Staal argued, met the need for ornament that conservatives such as Granpré Molière, leader of the Delft School, called for, but without losing the primacy of form.<sup>10</sup> Staal concluded that the sheer size and sense of monumentality produced by the building created an effect that was "modern, light and worldly," setting a standard for future buildings.<sup>11</sup>

Staal's critique was particularly important in the Netherlands, since Staal had recently beaten out Oud in a competition for the design of the Amsterdam Town Hall. Oud's design, which had failed to even make the final round, had reintroduced decoration in the form of light-colored brick and stone. Although Dutch critics took little notice, several international critics had immediately questioned this reintroduction of decoration.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, they were voicing the sentiments that once had once led Oud to call the use of decoration for housing designs "architectural impotency."<sup>13</sup> But Oud, and other Dutch modernists such as Staal, believed that the standard of expressive detailing should be different for housing designs than it was for public buildings. Staal's winning design for the Amsterdam Town Hall had also contained restrained decoration. But the supporting theory for the introduction of decoration

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9. Staal, 3.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Sigfried Giedion to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 29 July 1938, GTA, Zurich. Also see Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 410.

13. J.J.P. Oud, "Kunst en Machine."

placed Oud and those who shared his views within the Dutch movement at odds with American stylistic notions of modern design.

Reviews of the Shell Building that appeared after the war continued to be positive and strengthened Oud's reputation in the Netherlands. One of the earliest of these reviews appeared in *De Groene Amsterdammer* in 1946. The author was J.J. Vriend, a critic sympathetic to modernism. Vriend made many of the same points that Staal had made five years earlier and expanded his critique by noting that the building offered not only a resolution of Dutch modernist concerns of the 1930s but also suggested a possible basis for postwar design.<sup>14</sup>

Although Vriend observed that Oud had not built many buildings in the decade preceding the construction of the Shell Building, he argued that Oud's functional influences had been transformed in a monumental building that captured a symbolism beyond the utility of the materials. More importantly, Vriend argued that Oud had avoided the neoclassical style associated with the occupying Germans without returning to quotations of traditional, historical designs.<sup>15</sup>

Articles with titles like "De Grondslagen van een Toekomstige architectuur" (The Fundamentals of a Future Architecture) appeared over the next six years. These articles either focused directly on Oud's Shell Building as a model of postwar architecture, or combined the analysis of his building with other examples of buildings supporting his design choices.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to these generally positive assessments of the

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14. Jacobus Johannes Vriend, "Het nieuwe kantoorgebouw voor de BIM door J.J.P. Oud," *Groene Amsterdammer*, 12 January 1946. Also see J.H. van den Broek, "Stroomingen en tendenties in de nieuwe Nederlandsche Architectuur," *Bouw* 1 (1946): 9.

15. Vriend, "Het nieuwe Kantoorgebouw voor de B.I.M. door architect J.J.P. Oud."

16. C.P.A. de Wit, "De Grondslagen van een Toekomstige architectuur," *Bouwbedrijf en Openbar Werken* 26, no. 17 (1949): 179–192; H.J. de Haas, "Kantoorgebouw voor Shell Nederland N.V. te 's-Gravenhage," *Bouwbedrijf en Openbar Werken* 24, no. 2 (1947): 11–15 and no. 3 (1947): 21–24.

Shell Building; and to his elevated position on reconstruction committees, Oud remained one of the leaders of Dutch architecture in the postwar years.<sup>17</sup> From this position, he argued that modernism should remain provisional by maintaining a synthesis between the design process and the evolving postwar needs of the Dutch.

### ***Oud's Dutch Postwar Writings: Defining the In-Between***

Oud's initial postwar journal articles did not focus so much on his own modern concepts for reconstruction architecture as on the Delft School and its leader, Molière, who advocated reconstruction through restoration in traditional Dutch-styled architecture. The debates between Oud and Molière had begun before the war when both were members of Opbouw, but the discussions gained greater urgency with pending choices for reconstruction. In one of his earliest postwar articles, Oud contrasted the synthesis of architecture that a recent review had praised his Shell Building for promoting with Molière's use of the word "synthesis."<sup>18</sup> In the "De Delftsche School en synthese in architecture" (The Delft School and Synthesis in Architecture), Oud wrote:

"Synthesis is at this moment the key word through which the development of architecture must be further stimulated. I stand very skeptical against this word in this context.

Synthesis, compilation, is a concentration of strengths: a fixing of disparate energies to a point. It is a static question. . . The Delft School is and was never any sort of synthesis.

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17. During the occupation, Oud was busy with the completion of his Shell Building and garnered one of the most prestigious reconstruction commissions, the Hofplein in Rotterdam. Immediately following the war, he was given the highest status on many reconstruction committees in Rotterdam and thus was entitled to jobs in key sections of the city. He was also a member of the Rijkscommissie voor de Monumentenzorg (National Historic Monuments Commission). Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 426, 428.

Synthesis of what has been, a connection, in this case comprised of forgotten ways that now again strive for attractiveness.<sup>19</sup>

This article represented the beginning of Oud's efforts to define a position between his perception of the Delft School's hollow search for an "attractiveness" and the stripped-down, purely functional form advocated by many other modernists. Situated between these two extremes, Oud no longer represented the vanguard of modern design, but an in-between point that required continual definition. Oud's modernism had not changed—it remained provisional—but the Dutch context surrounding it had done so.

In an article published later that same year, Oud strengthened both his attack on the Delft School and his objections to its methods, comparing the Delft School's advocacy of traditional forms to tendencies of the Third Reich to promote traditional architectural styles.<sup>20</sup> In this article, Oud also contrasted his architectural designs for a new and better Netherlands with that of the backward looking traditional designs. At the same time, he objected to the use of supervisors to oversee many of the reconstruction projects, arguing that this form of bureaucracy limited the architect's creativity.<sup>21</sup> Over the next six years, Oud published numerous articles, each of which defined his independent position more clearly within the framework of the larger reconstruction movement.

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18. Vriend, "Het nieuwe Kantoorgebouw voor de B.I.M. door architect J.J.P. Oud."

19. "Synthese, samenstelling, is een concentratie van krachten: een vastzetten van verspreide energie of één punt. Het is een statische kwestie. . . De Delftsche School is en was nooit anders dan synthese. Synthèse van wat geweest is; verbinding, in dit geval compromis, van vele verloren gegane en nu opnieuw nagestreefde aantrekkelijkheden." J.J.P. Oud, "De Delftsche School en synthese in architecture," *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 64, no. 24 (1946): 222.

20. J.J.P. Oud, "Wij bouwen weer op?" *Groene Amsterdammer*, 21 December 1946, 11.

21. Ibid.

Oud's most comprehensive argument for his postwar position in the Dutch debate over reconstruction was contained in an article entitled "Durven en niet durven in de architectuur" (Daring and Not Daring in Architecture).<sup>22</sup> In this article Oud clearly stated his objections to the revivalist Delft School—including his objections to supervisors who oversaw the designs and solutions generated by collective thinking—and he criticized modern designs that relied on new materials to create forms, rather than innovative forms constructed from these new materials. Oud demanded that architecture extend beyond historical forms or the conglomeration of contemporary materials to produce a "truth for now, and later, as a spiritual representation of the content of a period."<sup>23</sup>

In an effort to reinforce his attacks on the Delft School and the functionalists, Oud attempted to establish a connection between his theoretical position before the war and his current position. He began his article "Building Without Make-Up" (1949) with an analysis of his seminal article "On the Future of Architecture and Its Architectonic Possibilities" (1921).<sup>24</sup> Rather than discussing the state of modernism at the time of his article, Oud regretted not including Robert Maillart's bridge designs in his article, which had been featured in Sigfried Giedion's book *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941). Oud believed Maillart's bridge designs went beyond the merely functional to capture the spirit of the material in their form.

Giedion's formal analysis of Maillart's bridges compared them to modern painting. Oud rejected Giedion's analysis as being too limited. Instead, Oud argued for a design process that combined illusionistic space and the architect's response to the

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22. J.J.P. Oud, "Durven en niet durven in de architectuur," *Bouw* 1 (1946): 613–14, 620–21.

23. *Ibid.*, 613.



actual physical requirements of a specific project. Oud described this characteristic in Maillart's bridge designs, adding that it made the bridges look like a living organisms, so that in each design "a field of sensitive life surrounded the surface of the work, but the spirit pulsed through the total organism, like the blood through the veins."<sup>25</sup>

Oud continued to position himself between the traditionalists and the functionalists by describing how Maillart captured the timeless spirit of architecture in new materials. He argued that "the spirit of Maillart is also the spirit of our good old country architecture, transported through concrete into a new time."<sup>26</sup> Oud's desire for an architecture that was responsive to contemporary concerns did not entail a rejection of history. Rather, as in the prewar period, Oud wanted new materials to aid the expression of good design. Maillart's prewar architecture represented the fusion of the enduring human spirit with new materials—a fusion brought to artistic expression by a single individual.

The role of the individual architect was essential to maintaining a provisional outlook rather than one comprised by a committee of architects—a growing trend in postwar design. Oud expressed the belief that the individual architect could overcome the pure functionalism seen in many group designs in his essay "Bouwen en Teamwork" (Building and Teamwork, 1952).<sup>27</sup> Launching a multifaceted attack on team design, Oud offered criticism similar to that he had leveled against the Delft School's use of supervisors. Once again, Oud called upon history—in this case, ancient builders—to serve as an example. He argued that the designs of ancient buildings emanated from

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24. J.J.P. Oud, "Building without Make-Up," *Groene Amsterdammer*, 22 January 1949, 7.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. J.J.P. Oud, "Bouwen en Teamwork," *Groene Amsterdammer*, 9 February 1952, 11.

emotion, not from style, flatly stating that a design derived from teamwork could not “enter into one’s being” in the same way as did these ancient designs.<sup>28</sup> Oud argued that the leading masters of the postwar period all worked alone:

Look around yourself, experienced ones, that the truly famous buildings were always born out of a spirit and that they come from one name. Has anyone ever heard of a “team Frank Lloyd Wright”? Or of a “team Mies van der Rohe”?<sup>29</sup>

Like all of Oud’s writings, the reference to the famous Wright and Mies not only served to provide a current example, but also alluded to the prewar period when Oud’s own works were equated with these modernists’ designs.

But in so many ways, Wright’s and Mies’s positions were different from his own. Wright had never identified with the International Style—or with any group for that matter.<sup>30</sup> His practice, which had suffered from a lack of commissions during the early 1930s, had regained prominence with the completion of Fallingwater (1934–1937), which led to a number of significant commissions in the postwar period. This enabled Wright to remain aloof from all architectural groups until his death in 1959.<sup>31</sup>

Mies’s architecture likewise enjoyed a growing popularity in America in the immediate postwar period—a popularity that included a retrospective of his work in 1947 at MoMA.<sup>32</sup> Philip Johnson, the author of the accompanying catalog, compared

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28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Schulze, 82–85.

31. Neil Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): 217–18.

32. Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*. Terence Riley argues that this exhibition was particularly important, due to its wide media coverage in both professional and general-circulation publications. In addition, he notes that the accompanying catalog was the first book that dealt solely with van der Rohe’s

Mies's work to that of the International Style Exhibition's featured European architects—Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Oud—and argued that Mies's work was unassailably superior to the theirs:

But none of these men [Gropius, Corbusier, and Oud] equaled the breadth or depth of Mies van der Rohe's pioneer work; none of them explored so far in so many different directions. Today Mies's projects seem least dated. His concrete office building of 1922, if it were erected now, might strike us as rather extreme, but it would not appear old-fashioned.<sup>33</sup>

Not only had Mies—who in 1932 had competed with Oud to see which one would further develop the International Style—been named the European architect most important to the development of modernism, but Johnson had praised his current work for the Illinois Institute of Technology. Johnson called the design for the new campus, which Mies had begun in 1937, Mies's "main creative work in America, and the most important of his entire career."<sup>34</sup> He went on to analyze several other recent proposals by Mies and concluded: "His position as one of the most important innovators of the present century is assured, and the quality of his achievements, so far as we can judge now, is second to none among his contemporaries."<sup>35</sup>

In contrast, Oud designed projects that resembled the Shell Building in their effort to balance traditionalism and functionalism. He owed these commissions largely

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work, and that it has been in print nearly continuously since its publication. See Terence Riley, "Making History: Mies van der Rohe and The Museum of Modern Art," in *Mies in Berlin*, eds. Terence Riley and Barry Bergdoll (New York: Harry Abrams, 2001), 11.

33. Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, 34.

34. *Ibid.*, 131.

35. *Ibid.*, 165.

to his commanding position on many reconstruction committees. He was a member of the Rijkscommissie voor de Monumentenzorg (National Historic Monuments Commission), which helped him to claim the design commission for the National Monument on the Dam Square (1946–1956); and he held the highest position on many reconstruction committees in Rotterdam, which gave him a great deal of leeway in proposing urban planning and building designs.<sup>36</sup>

His Spaarbank (1942–1957) in Rotterdam serves as one example of the results of his powerful reconstruction position, and of his continued efforts to expand the expressive possibilities of modernism without relinquishing its underlying forms (Figures 26 & 27). The building was symmetrical both in its plan and in its façade. A wide, centrally placed entrance captured the horizontal rhythm of the four floors above the main floor, which were sandwiched between two slightly protruding stairwells on either end of the building. As in the Shell Building, sculptural accents decorated the entrance and accented the round windows on each landing of the stairwells.<sup>37</sup> But although Oud received postwar commissions for prominent structures in the Netherlands, these projects did not gain international recognition. Oud continued to define and isolate his vision for a provisional modernism with attacks against modernists, whom he accused of sharing the same faults as planners who called for traditional reconstruction.

Oud concentrated his criticisms particularly on the firm of Johannes Hendrik van der Broek (1898–1978) and Jacob Bakema (1914–1981), modern Dutch planners and members of CIAM, who had recently developed designs through “teamwork” under the supervision of Willem Dudok. In “Architect en Supervisor” (Architect and Supervisor,

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36. Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 428.

37. For further information on the Spaarbank, see Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 436–47.

1952), Oud criticized Dudok's supervision of a shop design by Van der Broek and Bakema as sacrificing creativity in favor of a misguided uniformity.<sup>38</sup> Dudok's role reminded Oud of the role of the beauty commissions under which many reconstruction architects worked who were inspired by traditional designs.

At the end of 1952, Bakema and Oud began an exchange of a series of letters concerning Oud's criticisms of both supervision and teamwork. In an article entitled "Open brief aan architect J.J.P. Oud" (Open Letter to Architect J.J.P. Oud), Bakema painted a much less stringent picture of his firm's collaboration with Dudok than Oud had done, comparing it to Oud's own past process in the 1920s for designing housing under the guidance of the municipality of Rotterdam.<sup>39</sup> Bakema's defense of teamwork centered on Oud's assessment of the proposed designs for the UNESCO Building in Paris. In his article "Building or Industrial Design?" (1952), Oud had noted that many of the designs for the proposed building were produced by teams of architects.<sup>40</sup> At best, Oud felt that this process could develop good "industrial design" and at worst, something closer to product design, like the shape of a car.<sup>41</sup> Bakema responded several months later that the proposed collaborative designs for the UNESCO Building represented architecture for the future, but "not the sort that you look for."<sup>42</sup> He argued that the flexibility that allowed the building to integrate itself more fully into the surrounding space was achieved by teamwork, and that many ideas made for variability, not neutrality.

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38. J.J.P. Oud, "Architect en Supervisor," *Groene Amsterdammer*, 3 May 1952.

39. Jakob Bakema, "Open brief aan architect J.J.P. Oud," *Groene Amsterdammer*, 6 December 1952, 8–10.

40. J.J.P. Oud, "Bouwkunst of Industrial Design?" *Groene Amsterdammer*, 1 November 1952, 12.

41. *Ibid.*, 12.

42. Jan Berend Bakema, "Architectuur en 'teamwork,'" *Bouw* 8 (1953): 58.

In response, Oud employed his familiar process of questioning teamwork, but not modern design; of arguing against a supervisor, but not against the creativity of the individual architect; and of using the work of other architects who thought as he did to bolster his position. In the first paragraph of his published letter, Oud noted that he did not question the materials or the social underpinnings of modern architecture, but rather the ability of teamwork to fully realize these formative materials: "I criticize the "UNESCO-plan" not because of its expression—most likely not—but because of the quality that strikes me as not extremely high. I attribute this to the working in a team-relationship."<sup>43</sup> Again and again, Oud reiterated that the process of design—not a profusion of modern materials—gave a building its meaning.

Oud located both the origins of and the solution for the problem of teamwork in America, although he had never been there himself. While he criticized America as "the land of teamwork," he turned to America's most famous individual practitioner—Wright—to bolster his attack on group planning. Oud noted that Wright had recently called the team designed UN Building in New York unimaginative and a "tombstone of peace", which led Oud to question how it differed from an everyday corporate building. Group design, for Oud, existed less because it created good buildings than because the designers believed that more architects created a better design. Oud drew a distinction between his own process of provisional modernism, which that the individual architect's theories respond to constructive challenges, and the group process of design, which required that individual architects abandon their own theories in favor of a group generated design before the constructive constraints of the project were even addressed.

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43. J.J.P. Oud, "Architectuur: lichtend symbol of grootste gemene deler?," *Bouw* 8, no. 4 (1953): 60.

The combination of Oud's postwar status and his attacks on both traditional and modern group design allowed him to occupy a distinct position in Dutch postwar debates—a position that he had constantly to define and clarify by publishing new articles. Whether Oud could create such a position for himself internationally would depend upon these same two factors: perceived status and the ability to assert himself critically in writing.

### ***Oud and the Internationalized American Movement***

Several international critics rejected Oud's Shell Building as it lacked the formal characteristics of modernism. Chief among these critics was Philip Johnson. The critical rejection was a result both of Oud's absence from international architectural debates since the early 1930s, and of the effect of this absence on the position he held in the internationalized American modernist movement, as compared to the Dutch movement. Immediately following the liberation of the Netherlands, Oud began to correspond with contacts abroad, hoping to publish his Shell Building. Having finally designed and constructed a large public building, and bolstered by positive reviews in the Dutch press, Oud believed that the Shell Building could win him international recognition, as his housing designs had done before the war. He turned first to his friend Philip Johnson for his opinion of the project:

Don't be afraid to write that you are disappointed I am so "conventionally" (to speak with my friend Giedion!). Let it work a bit in you. Years ago lots of people also disliked what I did and afterwards they took what I invented and they were defying then against me what I myself had discovered and what I tried to bring to further development. To

propagandize what is common knowledge seems to me the work of a schoolmaster. We have to explore always-new terrain. I myself I am sure that I did a bit of this in the Shell-building again and I hope that you will find after studying it that I am right. If “conventional” to use anew the rules that as long as the world rolls have reigned good architecture than I am “conventionally.”<sup>44</sup>

The tone of this letter lacked the confidence of Oud’s prewar correspondence. He was clearly seeking Johnson’s approval. Possibly he was worried about Giedion’s prewar reservations concerning Dutch architecture that resembled his own work, since Giedion had become an influential voice in the American modernist debates since arriving in America in 1938.<sup>45</sup> In this letter to Johnson, Oud presented his project in the way in which it had been accepted in Holland—as a building that advanced modernism through by adhering to timeless architectural concepts. But after seeing the first photos of the building, Johnson was unconvinced:

Also the pictures of the Shell-building came some time ago. I do not know what to say. Maybe I ought to wait until I can see you and we can talk over the whole thing together. Frankly, to me the building looks like a return to Dutch tradition rather than the next step in international architecture. It is International only if Berlage was an International architect. No one but a Dutchman would have built it just that way. That is fine but why call it International? I am afraid I am as old fashioned as poor Giedion.<sup>46</sup>

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44. J.J.P. Oud to Philip Johnson, 18 December 1945, File 100, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

45. Sigfried Giedion to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, 29 July, 1938, GTA, Zurich. Cited in Taverne, Wagenaar, and de Vletter, 366.



Johnson's response revealed less about Oud's building than it did about Johnson's idea of modern style, since his use of the word "old fashioned" ironically signaled an adherence to prewar terminology. In the context of prewar modernism, Oud's building might have been seen as a simple aberration, or as an attempt to find a new direction. But in the postwar context of a search for the continued relevance of a modern style—based in the perception of the stability of its prewar terms—Oud's building threatened both concepts. Oud's challenge to the idea of a stable modern style made his attempt to reenter the debates of international postwar modernism that much more difficult.

Since the center of modernist debate had shifted to America during the war, Oud also attempted to have the Shell Building published in English-language journals that were read in America, but not published there. At the same time he was corresponding with Johnson, Oud sent an article on the Shell Building to the *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA Journal)*.<sup>47</sup> The strategy worked; the *RIBA Journal* published the article accompanied by photos, plans, and an elevation of the building.<sup>48</sup> Oud had used this strategy before the war, in the Netherlands and other European countries, to promote his work. Although the photos that accompanied this article had for the most part been published already in Dutch journals, subtle commentary provided by the editors appeared in the captions. For example: "The entrance to the canteen from the garden is decorated with coloured tiles," appeared under a close-up of the dining facility for employees in the rear of the building.<sup>49</sup> The suggested focus on the decorative aspects of the building undermined Oud's intention—which was to promote

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46. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 25 December 1945, File 100, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

47. E.L. Bird to J.J.P. Oud, 29 October 1945, File 99, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

48. "Head Office, Shell Company. . .," *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 53, no. 5 (1946): 162–66.

the entire project. The decorative aspects, however, soon became the crux of the international debate about the Shell Building.

Douglas Haskell, the editor of the *Architectural Record*, exchanged a number of letters with Oud, leading to the publication of the Shell Building. Haskell, who was a supporter of Wright and therefore a potential advocate for Oud's work, did not understand Oud's design any better than Johnson had done:

This was a rather surprising building to the editors and it would have been unnatural for us to present it without, so to speak, a question mark. You had not yourself in your notes gone into the question of the esthetic treatment, which seemed to involve a widespread departure. . . . If there were a chance to talk I would want to challenge sharply what you are doing.<sup>50</sup>

Haskell's rejection of Oud's design severely damaged Oud's chances for reestablishing his position in America, since Haskell both was influential and had been a critic of the International Style Exhibition, and therefore represented a possible means of circumventing the reception of supporters of MoMA such as Johnson.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, Haskell published Oud's Shell Building under the title "Mr. Oud Embroiders a Theme."<sup>52</sup> Haskell and the other editors were even more specific in their criticisms than Haskell had been in his letter to Oud. They criticized both the overall form of the building and its use of ornament:

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49. Ibid., 163.

50. Douglas Haskell to J.J.P. Oud, 13 December 1946, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

51. For more information on Haskell's position see Robert Benson "Douglas Haskell and the Criticism of International Modernism," in *Modern Architecture in America: Visions and Revisions*, eds., Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney Robinson (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991), 165–83.

52. "Mr. Oud Embroiders a Theme," *Architectural Record* 100, no. 6 (1946): 80–84.

The plan of the Shell Building is hard to distinguish from straight academic. Its major forces seem to be not nascent from the problem but are recognizable as repertory out of the architect's notebook. The very insistent, heavy, separate, imposed pattern of "decoration" seems visually related not to a keen process of expanding apperception but rather to the pleasant reminiscences of peasant art.<sup>53</sup>

The editors doubly damned the building as being both academic and quaint—anything but modern. The defense of the design of this building was the crux of Oud's self-definition during the immediate postwar period.

Oud sent Haskell a response, intended for publication that clearly described his vision for modern architecture:

But let me defend myself and allow me to state that this is not my mistake. I have always tried to keep myself far away from all "rules." See something "new" the world is immediately willing to give it a label and to place it in a partition. I know definitely that I myself never succumbed to this labeling. Since I attempted to go my own way in architecture I always had only one device—a device which has guided me up to now!: "seeking clear forms for clearly expressed needs." This proved to me not to be a matter of static, it was a thing of dynamic order. The rules it brought were not of a formal nature but very informal ones. It became evident that they were changing, within distinct limits, with the development of the idea.<sup>54</sup>

Oud described his provisional modernism in the last three sentences, but the response was never published, and the skepticism that Haskell's article produced handicapped

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53. Ibid., 81.

Oud's ability to promote his vision. It was probably for this reason that Oud returned to defending the Shell Building by attacking other postwar movements and buildings.

In a series of articles published in the *RIBA Journal*, Oud continued to promote his vision for modernism, but his tone had become defensive:

In the Architectural Record of March 1947 I answered in a short article ("Building or Architecture?") and I quote from it: "Architecture itself—old or new—can and must give emotion. It has to transport the aesthetic vision of one man (the architect) to another (the onlooker). And why should it not? . . . And further: Why should it be forbidden to give functional doing a spiritual form? Functioning alone as a leading principle—my experience taught me this—results in esthetic arbitrariness. Don't forget this."<sup>55</sup>

By asking rhetorical questions and referring to his own previous experience, Oud attempted to take advantage of his prewar stature to promote his vision of a responsive modernism. But promoting his ideas from a weakened position made his use of a series of questions to appear searching for rather than confirming of his idea of modernism. In addition, his references to the past only highlighted incongruities between Oud's provisional modernism and the formalism that his supporters had previously ignored because the prewar forms of his buildings were so seductively austere. Instead of establishing a position for himself in the internationalized American movement, Oud's rhetoric undermined the foundation upon which he had built his reputation in America.

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54. J.J.P. Oud to Douglas Haskell, 22 January 1947, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

55. J.J.P. Oud, "U.N. Building," *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 55, no. 8 (1948): 363.

## ***Monumentality and Oud***

In short, the Shell Building failed to meet the codified stylistic parameters of the International Style. This became a growing problem, especially when Johnson attempted to reassert control over the terms of debate about modernism in America. With the help of Hitchcock, Barr, and Giedion, who had established their reputations by engaging in prewar stylistic analysis, Johnson began to promote the primacy of a stylistic interpretation even before the end of World War II. Even though Oud had never defined his building as “monumental,” it soon became a reference point against which the burgeoning postwar discussions as to whether “monumental” had any role to play in modern architecture defined itself.<sup>56</sup>

Like many of the debates on focus issues that arose after the war, the debate over monumentality was defined as much by the position of the speakers or the institution they represented as by what they were saying. Since critics and historians had played an important role in shaping the understanding of modern architecture in America before World War II, each of these critics had established his own position on the subject—positions that they either defended or transformed in debates during and following the war. It would seem that the Shell Building should have benefited from the commentaries of Johnson, Hitchcock, and Barr, since all three of these critics had supported Oud’s work in the 1930s. But, the Shell Building only became known in

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56. For more information on monumentality and modernism, see Christine Collins and George Collins, “Monumentality: A Critical Matter in Modern Architecture,” *Harvard Architecture Review: Monumentality and the City* 4 (Spring 1984):15–35, which also includes an excellent bibliography; Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 24–33; William Curtis, “Presence of Absence: Louis I. Kahn and Modern Monumentality,” *Ptah*, no. 1 (2002): 21–33; Mark Wigley, “The Architectural Cult of Synchronization,” *October*, no. 94 (Fall 2000): 31–61.

America after positions in the modernist debate had already been established in the wartime period.

In 1943 while the war raged on in Europe, a symposium was held in New York City entitled “New Architecture and City Planning.” Paul Zucker, a professor at Cooper Union and the New School for Social Research, compiled the presentations thematically in a book with the same title.<sup>57</sup> The content was organized under categories, including housing, new materials, new construction methods, and monumentality. The section entitled “The Problem of a New Monumentality” directly addressed the issue that Oud had faced when designing his Shell Building—how to apply the principles of modern housing design to a large public building. Zucker suggested in the foreword that this question might be answered by designing for the social function of the building rather than focusing on its formal elements: “Even the most aesthetically minded architect, scarcely less than the sociologist or housing expert, begins to think and conceive in terms of social function rather than in terms of stylistic form.” But, especially on the question of monumentality, the discussion revolved around the issue of style. This was because the several of the speakers on the panel focused specifically on style in their presentations.<sup>58</sup>

Sigfried Giedion opened the session on monumentality with a lecture that rejected current attempts at designing monumental buildings, but that offered only a nebulous goal in their place. Giedion criticized recent buildings that exhibited features such as a curtain of columns and austere detailing in an attempt to be monumental.

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57. In a conversation I had with Helene Lipstadt, she noted that Sarah Goldhagen in her research for her Louis Kahn book was never able to confirm that the symposium actually took place. This may be why Williams refers to it as a “published symposium” in her book. See Williams, 24.

The Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh and the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich stood as examples of a style he termed “pseudo-monumentality.” Giedion argued that the monumental building should serve the community by focusing its attention on “collective emotional events.”<sup>59</sup> Returning to prewar forms, he argued that the rejected League of Nations design (1927) by Le Corbusier represented a prototype for a new monumentality, even though he did not describe exactly how the prototype would function. Giedion openly admitted that his ideas on monumentality were not fully developed, but he also warned his audience that “monumentality is a dangerous affair in a time when most of the people do not even grasp the elementary requirements for a functional building.”<sup>60</sup> He promised to present “a common resolution of nine points” of monumentality in a future essay, but it was understood from this lecture that the “elementary requirements” had been established in the prewar period.<sup>61</sup>

As promised, Giedion’s “Nine Points of Monumentality,” compiled in conjunction with José Luis Sert and Fernand Léger, was written just after the conference though published much later in 1958.<sup>62</sup> Despite the late publication of the document, it still reveals the solidification of Giedion’s thinking on monumentality. Giedion and his colleagues seemed to call for much the same kind of resurgence in architectural ornamentation that Oud had called for:

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58. Paul Zucker, “Planning in Three Dimensions,” in *New Architecture and City Planning*, ed. Paul Zucker (New York: Philosophical Society, 1944), 4.

59. Sigfried Giedion, “A Need for a New Monumentality,” *New Architecture and City Planning*, ed. Paul Zucker (New York: Philosophical Society, 1944), 568.

60. *Ibid.*, 549.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Gropius invited Giedion to give the Elliot Norton Lectures in 1938. These served as the basis for Giedion’s *Time, Space and Architecture*.

Monumental architecture will be something more than strictly functional. It will have regained its lyrical value. In such monumental layouts, architecture and city planning could attain a new freedom and develop new creative possibilities, such as those that have begun to be felt in the last decades in the fields of painting, sculpture, music and poetry.<sup>63</sup>

Oud's intention to introduce symbolic and emotional elements into the Shell Building overlapped with some of Giedion's objectives for new monumentality, but it stood in direct contrast to the other ideas introduced in the Nine Points about light materials for construction and a flexibility in the structure. The Shell Building, with its symmetry and stripped down monumentalism was not connected to these goals. In addition, Oud's effort at monumentality was created to promote the power of the Shell Company rather than community or democratic ideals that Giedion and others, such as Hitchcock, emphasized in their writings. Rather than looking like a building block for progressive architecture, it appeared to resemble more closely the totalitarian architecture of the 1930s.

Following World War II, two symposiums—one sponsored by the *Architectural Review* ( "A Search for a New Monumentality," 1948), and the other sponsored by MoMA ("What's Happening to Modern Architecture?" 1948)—focused on the state of modern architecture and the role of the monumental within it. The question of how the monumental could be integrated with the definition of modernism already supported by these institutions was the unstated goal of these meetings. The symposium panel for the *Architectural Review* included many people who were familiar with Oud's work,

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63. Sigfried Giedion, "Nine Points of Monumentality (1943)" in *Architecture, You and Me: The Diary of a*



among them Giedion, Hitchcock, Gropius, and Alfred Roth. The MoMA panel also included a list of names that would have been familiar to Oud, among them Barr, Hitchcock, Johnson, Gropius, and Mumford. I will focus on Hitchcock's participation in both symposia, since Oud published articles in which he supported some of Hitchcock's views as a means of regaining prominence in America—even though Hitchcock was often critical of Oud's work.

Like many of the other speakers at the *Architectural Review* conference, Hitchcock believed that monumentality had a role to play in modern architecture, but he found it difficult to describe that role. Early in his speech he attempted to do by suggesting where monumentality might exist, and where it definitely did not exist:

The reason we suspect that the twentieth century has already produced valid examples of monumental expression is that we can recognize qualities of monumentality in certain work such as dams, highways, power stations, while in other edifices consciously intended to be monumental—government buildings, libraries, museums and so forth—it is evident that monumental expression is merely simulated.<sup>64</sup>

For Hitchcock, Oud's Shell Building (alluded to, though not specifically mentioned) fell into this latter category, representing a forced application of the monumental. Hitchcock dismissed Oud's attempt to form a monumental language "patently inappropriate" and "a probable hazard of such a conscious development."<sup>65</sup> In the end, Hitchcock tacitly agreed with Giedion's goals for a new monumentality, noting that the "occasional absurdities [like the Shell Building]" could be avoided if architects realized that a new

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*Development*, ed. Sigfried Giedion (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 1958), 51.

64. "In Search of a New Monumentality: A Symposium," *Architectural Review* 104, no. 621 (1948): 124.

urbanism was needed to create “a frame of reference within which individual edifices will be required to symbolize communal needs and aspirations.”<sup>66</sup> In this context, Oud’s prewar inclination to develop an area around a single building appeared outdated; the postwar idea was to plan an area and allow its overall character to determine the placement of significant structures. This was an idea promoted by the urban planning manifestos of CIAM, with some of whose members Oud had already come into conflict in the Netherlands.

Although the MoMA symposium continued the debate on monumentality in modern practice, MoMA also used it to confirm the primacy of MoMA in defining modernism. Using the International Style Exhibition as a point of reference, Alfred Barr opened the conference with readings from *International Style Since 1922*, arguing that recent architectural developments still fell under MoMA’s “broad” definition, rather than viewing the definition as a “fixed or crushing mould.”<sup>67</sup> In the following speech, Hitchcock supported Barr’s claims: “It has seemed to me almost as if we could now consider International Style to be synonymous with the phrase ‘Modern Architecture’”<sup>68</sup> Hitchcock made no mention of Oud, but he suggested that the monumental might offer an avenue for the inclusion of dissenters from the original modern movement such as Frank Lloyd Wright—rather than being used as a tool to reject them.

A few speakers disagreed with this assessment. One of them was Mumford, now the architectural critic for the *New Yorker*, and still a supporter of modern design based on social need. Mumford questioned the firm picture of modernism painted by Barr,

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65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., 125.

67. “What Is Happening to Modern Architecture?” *The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 15 (Spring 1948): 6.

Hitchcock, and indirectly by Giedion. In his speech at the conference, and again in his introduction to the publication of the symposium, Mumford argued that the opinion that modern architecture was “growing up” and expanding its parameters. Like Oud, he championed “flexibility in approaching the problem of any particular building so that both sides of human nature—the introvert and the extrovert—will be thoroughly recognized.”<sup>69</sup> But as in the prewar period, association with members of the socially concerned modern movement in America weakened, rather than strengthened, Oud’s position.

Although they allowed Mumford’s opinions to be heard, the supporters of the stylistic analysis of architecture wanted to have the final word. A letter from Barr to Mumford, published at the end of the proceedings, achieved this effect:

At the same time it is equally evident that the style, which we saw developing in the 20’s and 30’s, has changed and matured subsequently. It still remains, I believe, the central tradition in modern architecture.<sup>70</sup>

Although he acknowledged that modernism had grown, Barr maintained that the established terms of formal analysis were still adequate for an understanding of postwar modernism. He and supporters of MoMA, like Hitchcock, continued to promote stylistic analysis as the best means for understanding the internationalized American based modern movement.

For the most part, Oud’s Shell Building lay far outside of these discussions about modernism—discussions that revolved as much around concerns for the fate of

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68. Ibid., 9.

architecture as around the question of who would define the terms of this fate. For a group of critics, historians, institutions, and journals attempting to define the role of monumentality, Oud's Shell Building offered one of the few concrete examples of an attempt to be monumental and modern. In prewar period, he had been recognized for his built forms. In the postwar period, his architecture provided the foil for the still undefined-resolution of modernism.

### ***Oud and CIAM***

Having taken no part in the wartime discussions and postwar debates in America, and facing the loss of advocacy from those who had once supported him, Oud chose to promote his architecture internationally by publishing articles defining his view of modernism, a method that had maintained his elevated position in Dutch postwar architectural debates. As he had done in Holland, he attacked the increasing emphasis on group design through teamwork—a concept that CIAM had begun to promote internationally. He also defended his Shell Building against the criticism that it represented a return to traditional forms. Finally, he aligned himself with modernists, such as Hitchcock and Wright, whose views on modernism were not influenced by groups like CIAM.

CIAM had become much more focused in its postwar outlook than it had before World War II. At that time, the group had represented many different international architects and ideas. But postwar CIAM—deeply influenced by Sigfried Giedion, its secretary—was struggling to maintain its influence in international debates that had

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69. *Ibid.*, 19.

70. *Ibid.*, 21.

shifted away from Europe and towards America.<sup>71</sup> To maintain its status, it focused on just one idea: that architecture was but one facet of urban planning. By attacking CIAM, Oud isolated himself from many European modernists who had once supported his efforts.

In a letter to the *RIBA Journal* published in 1948, Oud reaffirmed his position on the development of the Shell Building and contrasted his design process to the recent design for the UN Building in New York City—a design that had been produced by a team of architects:

It has only to do with my respect for the noble spirit of architecture, which is going to be, violated by the way this design came into the world!

“Collectivism” may be a wonderful thing now and then, but in our time architecture is not ripe for it. To speak with Mr. Hitchcock: “We have Architecture of Bureaucracy and Architecture of Genius.” Can a building for the Union of Nations do with less than “architecture of genius”?

We should not content ourselves with a peace factory designed by some of the best architecture-engineers of the world. We want a *symbol of peace* built by an *architect*!<sup>72</sup>

By associating his own call for architecture designed by individual architects with Hitchcock’s call for an architecture of genius, Oud sought to establish a connection between the authority of Hitchcock’s opinions and his own ideas. Oud was particularly attracted to Hitchcock’s statement that “only complex individual structures of

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71. Many scholars have argued that instead of providing original ideas about urban planning, CIAM mainly reproduced ideas from the nineteenth century—ideas that served to bolster the profile of its members rather than to advance thinking on the subject. See Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 3.

generalized symbolic meaning actually fail architecturally when there has been no individual imaginative formulation.”<sup>73</sup> Hitchcock’s emphasis on individual design seemed implicitly to support Oud’s provisional modernism, which relied on the creativity of an individual architect. This despite the fact that Hitchcock had found fault with the Shell Building in his earlier symposium presentation for the *Architectural Review*.

But Hitchcock’s criticisms of the Shell did not waiver, as he made clear in a series of letters to Oud written in 1948. In a letter dated 18 August, Hitchcock explicitly stated that the Shell Building was an unsuccessful example for the development of modern architecture: “Although I sympathized with your purpose there [in the Shell Building], as you are probably aware, I did not care for the ornamental detail in itself; and while I understand your restiveness and that of so many architects against the stringencies of the architecture of the ‘20s and ‘30s, I have yet to see . . . any examples of this “reaction”, if you may call it so, which seem to me really successful.”<sup>74</sup> Although Hitchcock admitted that he was reluctant to condemn the Shell Building outright, he did not see it as a fruitful beginning for postwar modernism.<sup>75</sup>

In his response to this letter, Oud compared his isolation from the internationalized American movement to that of Frank Lloyd Wright—a comparison that he would employ time and time again in the postwar period to defend his architecture and to suggest that he and Wright shared similar design philosophies. Oud justified his use of ornament on the Shell Building by quoting Wright, noting that it was “of the thing,

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72. J.J.P. Oud, “United Nations Headquarters,” *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 55, no. 12 (1948): 560.

73. Henry Russell Hitchcock, “The Architecture of Bureaucracy and the Architecture of Genius,” *Architectural Review* 101, no. 601 (1947): 6.

74. Henry Russell Hitchcock to J.J.P. Oud, 18 August 1948, File 111, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

75. Ibid.

not on it.”<sup>76</sup> He went on to suggest that if American critics would only develop a broader perspective, his building would be received more favorably.<sup>77</sup> Oud argued that Hitchcock’s failure to understand of his efforts resulted from a “spiritual mutation” in Hitchcock’s ideas that had led him to “step aside from the straight way of logical architectural development,” and from the wartime separation of the Netherlands and America that had “caused a great many gaps in our oversight of growing ideas.”<sup>78</sup> But Hitchcock remained unconvinced, making Oud’s efforts to promote his architecture that much more difficult without the support of one of his earliest advocates.

The debate about Oud’s Shell Building continued in the form of a series of letters that appeared in the *RIBA Journal*. These letters focused on Oud’s criticisms of team design. The prominent British architect Howard Robertson (1888–1963) and Edward Passmore, one of Robertson’s supporters, defended the UN Building which Oud had attacked, and argued that Oud’s opposition to team design was inconsistent with modern practice.<sup>79</sup> Coming from outside the American circles of modernist debate, these letters may have carried less weight than they would otherwise have done. On the other hand, these letters represented viewpoints in the English language of Oud’s work already supported in America. In his letter, Robertson noted that the committee had only received a very general site plan, and that the detailing of the building had been under the control of the lead architect—answering Oud’s main criticism that the building had been designed by teamwork. He also warned Oud that neither the

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76. J.J.P. Oud to Henry Russell Hitchcock, 19 October 1948, File 112, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Howard Roberson, “Letter to the Editor,” *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 55, no. 9 (1948): 422. Edward Passmore, “Letter to the Editor,” *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 55, no. 10 (1948): 473. Howard Robertson was the former director of the Architectural Association in London.

architects nor the critics of the moment seemed particularly well positioned to pass judgment on current architecture since the future course of modernism remained unclear.

Passmore's letter, published the following month, focused on the idea that the design of the UN Building had steered a line between "utility and visual formalism" without resorting to the traditional concept of monumentality.<sup>80</sup> It concluded with the observation that "criticism of the kind which had been leveled at his [Oud's] work invariably follows in the wake of fame."<sup>81</sup> In saying so, Passmore explicitly acknowledged the fact that critics and historians viewed Oud's postwar efforts through the lens of expectations developed in the prewar period. This was the first time that any critic had made such a statement concerning Oud's work. The challenge that faced Oud was how to clarify his idea of a provisional modernism when critics had already discounted the finished product—which, for Oud, embodied the essential concept of modern theory constrained by practical realities.

Oud responded to these letters by calling upon his experience and his consistent call for an architecture that went beyond the purely functional. He referred to his prewar position, and to the similarity between that position and his current struggle to gain recognition for his architecture:

Pioneering thirty years ago in functional building, I met misunderstanding; today fighting to help functional building to rise to art-in building, I shall meet misunderstanding anew; this is clear but of no importance. . . We ought to be aware of the fact that functional building is the basis of New Architecture, but that it is not yet New Architecture itself. It is

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80. Passmore, 473.



not yet art-in-building. New architecture is more than the solution of present practical needs with contemporary building machinery. It is above all the result of idealism in the mind of the architect. It is the outcome of his force of aesthetic of expression.<sup>82</sup>

This passage contains Oud's clearest explanation of his progressive modernism, and of his belief that it had not fundamentally changed since its formation in the 1920s.

Expressing confidence that his argument would eventually overcome international critics' present indecision about the future course for modernism, he even punctuated some of his sentences with exclamation marks. Oud's tone in this letter conveyed an air of authority and inevitability that was associated more with the iconic status of his prewar architecture than with his current position in the internationalized American debates. Although he argued for the consistency of his perspective, Oud did not understand that the internationalized American movement's expectation for his architecture was that it would refine prewar forms rather than change them. Since his current forms appeared conservative and impotent to many critics, his reference to his prewar perseverance made him seem like a figure caught in the past rather than one inspired by it.

Oud continued his attack on the UN Building in an article entitled "Duidelijkheid in de stedbouw" (Clarity in Town Planning, 1949, 1951).<sup>83</sup> In this article, Oud offered his most direct critique of the efforts of CIAM, whose members dominated discussions of modern urban design. Oud had seen reconstruction designs in Holland that were driven more by uniformity and proper dispersal of services than by built form. Although he did

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81. Ibid.

82. J.J.P. Oud, "U.N. Building Letter," 560.

not mention CIAM by name in the article, he criticized proposals for tall housing blocks—which formed an integral part of CIAM's postwar urban planning. In contrast, Oud described a form of urban planning more in the spirit of Wright's Broadacre City—in which stand-alone single building designs were combined to form a whole. This was anathema to the members of CIAM who advocated integrated planning.

Shortly thereafter, he attempted to publish another article that criticized CIAM's adherence to functional goals.<sup>84</sup> Like his earlier response to Haskell, not a single English-language journal was willing to publish this article, probably because many of the points it covered had already been made by Oud in other articles. The avenue of publication that had long enabled Oud ability to publicize his ideas and promote his architecture was now closed to him. Without the support of the influential figures who had helped him to get his prewar writings published, Oud would not publish another article in an English-language journal until 1961.<sup>85</sup>

In conjunction with his attempts to define his position through published articles, Oud sought to gain outside support for his ideas, especially from Wright and Johnson, as his correspondence from this period makes clear. Although Oud wrote to Wright in mid-1952 ostensibly to gain support for his attack on the new CIAM design for the UNESCO Building in Paris, teamwork remained the main target of his letter:

I should like very much to plead a bit in the press (or in the UN) for more idealism in the new building: for more architecture. Could not you and I (and Mumford?) send a few

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83. J.J.P. Oud, "Duidelijkheid in de stedbouw," *Forum* 4 (1949): 127–30 and J.J.P. Oud, "Clarity in Townplanning," *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 58 (1951): 193–95.

84. Published only in Dutch as J.J.P. Oud, "Bouwkunst of industrial design?" *Groene Amsterdammer*, 1 November 1952, 12.

words to the press as a kind of a counteract? Why should this Giedions-gang again have the lead?<sup>86</sup>

Oud had previously written Wright to ask him for help in getting other articles published, and he probably thought that the offer of a unified position against CIAM might encourage Wright to join his crusade. But Wright appears never to have responded to his letter.

The following year, Oud wrote to Johnson, asking him to help him to get two articles—"Building and Teamwork," and "Building and Industrial Design?"—published in America. Both of these articles had already been published in Holland. Johnson replied that even though the articles deserved publication, "America is not the right place."<sup>87</sup> His letter continued:

We in modern architecture are under attack again by Frank Lloyd Wright and by reactionaries at the same time. Judging by your latest work I am sure that you would also be under the same attack. It is Mr. McCarthy in architecture. The result has been to draw us closer together; and I think that this year I will even go to CIAM's conference in Aix. . . . in spite of their collectivist tendencies.<sup>88</sup>

In this passage, Johnson revealed both his misunderstanding of Oud's position and the peripheral nature of Oud's relationship to the internationalized American modernist

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85. J.J.P. Oud, "Cooperation between Painters, Sculptors, and Architects. . ." *Information Bulletin: International Association of Plastic Arts*, no. 41 (1961): 9–12.

86. J.J.P. Oud to Frank Lloyd Wright, 25 May 1952, File 135, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

87. Ibid.

88. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 11 June 1953, File 136, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

movement, with his frequent references to “us”—implying Oud as the understood “them.”

At this point, Oud surely realized that Johnson no longer shared his provisional concept of architecture. Johnson’s turn towards CIAM had been foreshadowed in a letter that Oud had written to Hitchcock two years earlier: “I hope to fight until my last moments against the idea that the Mies apartments and the Johnson glasshouse have anything to do with architecture [other] than being “good building” or—in the same way—interesting experiment.”<sup>89</sup> He went on to note that art critics needed “to stimulate the architects to more and higher idealism . . . than is reigning at present!” Oud understood that in America the critics played a large role in determining the type of buildings that were being constructed.

The distance between Oud’s provisional modernism and his critics’ understanding of his architecture became apparent when his architecture no longer proved useful to his supporters in the international postwar debates based in America. Abandoned by his supporters, Oud turned to promoting his own work as he had done in the German and Dutch prewar movements, by organizing exhibitions and attempting to reassociate himself with artistic groups—something that he had been loath to do even at the beginning of his career when he was first trying to establish his reputation.

### ***The Exhibitions: Oud Attempts to Translate Local Recognition into International Stature***

Oud’s position in the Dutch, German, and American prewar modern architectural movements had relied heavily on his inclusion in the Bauhaus, Weissenhof, and the

International Style exhibitions—not to mention other, smaller shows. With this in mind, Oud's return to exhibitions to promote his architecture seemed at the time to be judicious, though the premise of these shows varied greatly from the premise of exhibitions in the prewar years. The Bauhaus, the Weissenhof, and the International Style exhibitions all combined elements of architecture within a framework of a focused argument, allowing Oud to advance his position both through association with other modern architects and through an appeal to still-developing modern ideals. In contrast, three postwar exhibitions—Oud's retrospective of 1951 at the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam; the De Stijl Exhibition later in 1951 at the Stedelijk Museum, which then traveled to America; and a traveling Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition, "Sixty Years of Living Architecture," in 1952 in Rotterdam—served to reflect on the achievements of his career, to solidify his reputation in postwar Holland, and to reestablish his position internationally.

Although Oud attempted to use these exhibitions to gain greater recognition for his work, the tone of his presentation had shifted since the prewar period. He turned to the past for moments when his provisional ideas had thrived to argue for the relevancy of these same ideas in the present:

You will see in the exhibition work of the "Stijl-movement" which seems to be obsolete now. I think it is. But you must realize that its origin is 30 years old and that the great significance of "De Stijl" is behind the realizations: the inner meaning of its principles, which are also at present of a great universal value. Looking around you will see that a younger generation is trying to bring these ideas further again and I am glad for that. "De

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89. J.J.P. Oud to Henry Russell Hitchcock, 2 February 1950, File 116, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

Stijl" aimed at a purer, fresher and freer world than the world of then and now. I think the spirit of "De Stijl" can do excellent work to-day as well!<sup>90</sup>

What began as a tentative speech became an assertion of the value of a prewar spirit, and of the value of that spirit in the postwar period. But Oud's attempt to show that his provisional modernism had been applied consistently throughout his career by referring to this prewar spirit ran the risk of historicizing him within the prewar period.

The Oud retrospective of 1951 was held to celebrate Oud's lifetime achievements and it had been planned to coincide with his sixtieth birthday. Although the museum meant for the exhibition to celebrate the achievements of this hometown architect, the show placed more emphasis on his international position than on his position within Holland.<sup>91</sup> This emphasis was due largely to Oud's own efforts. He was involved in every aspect of the exhibition, including the selection of works, the gallery design, and the catalog essay. An examination of the catalog shows that Oud conceived this exhibition as a celebration of the international ramifications of a locally developed architecture.

A detailed picture of the rear of one of Oud's Weissenhof Siedlung houses dominated the cover of the catalog, which included an essay on Oud's work, images of his buildings, a list of works displayed, and a substantial bibliography. Oud attempted to maintain control over the content of the essay, as he did over most other aspects of the exhibition. Its author, the art critic W. Jos de Gruyter (1899–1979), sent Oud a preliminary copy of the text in January 1951, with the intention of correcting any factual

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90. Text of Oud's opening speech in English for the De Stijl Exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, 6 July 1951, De Stijl Exhibition File, Oud Archive.

91. The exhibition had been planned to coincide with Oud's sixtieth birthday, but it was delayed a year.

errors. Oud responded in a letter dated 19 January, noting several factual errors, but also freely commenting on specific areas of analysis. Oud particularly objected to de Gruyter's suggestion that Le Corbusier might have influenced Oud's Hoek van Holland housing estate:

Hoek van Holland is naturally "in my" production. It is possible that some similar things appeared in the world (that is by the way so), but for a long time we knew of "De Stijl" and nothing of Le Corbusier. . . In America, one naturally named: Le Corbusier, Mies Van Der Rohe, Gropius and me as "the leaders" of the "new style" and I have never come across an opinion different than it. Hitchcock blamed Le Corbusier for taking De Stijl-ideas, rather than the opposite. It is somewhat beyond me, since men in Holland (the professors, etc.) place all of modern architecture in the writings of Le Corbusier rather than me, also something that if allowed, strengthens this idea.<sup>92</sup>

Oud drew a distinction between Le Corbusier and himself by calling upon Hitchcock. This suggests the value that he placed on Hitchcock's writings; it also suggests an attempt to leverage his international reception. Not only did Oud's position in regard to Le Corbusier become the theme of a series of letters between Oud and de Gruyter, but also more generally Oud's international reception as recorded in Hitchcock and Johnson's *International Style*.

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92. "Hoek van Holland is zelfstandig "in mij" ontstaan. Het is mogelijk, dat sommige dingen gelijktijdig in de wereld opkomen (dat is trouwens zoo), maar langen tijd wisten wij van "De Stijl" niets van Le Corbusier. . . In Amerika noemt men gewoonlijk: Le Corbusier, Mies Van Der Rohe, Gropius en mij als "gangmakers" van de "nieuwe stijl" en ik heb daarbij nooit deze opmerkikng aangetroffen. Hitchcock verwijt eerder Le C. overnemen van Stijl-ideen, dan omgekeerd. Het zit me een beetje hoog, omdat men in Holland (de profeet, enz") liever de geheele mod. Architectuur aan Le. C. toeschrijft dan mij ook iets te gunnarn en dit versterkt deze opvatting." J.J.P. Oud to Jos de Gruyter, 19 January 1951, File 120, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

The defensive tone of Oud's letters to de Gruyter, who hardly modified the text of the essay (due partly to time constraints), continued in his final letter concerning the exhibition.<sup>93</sup> Arguing that his architecture had often been misunderstood or confused with other movements, Oud returned to the plight of his Shell Building, noting that Ayn Rand sympathized with the misunderstood role of the solo architect and had offered words of support in one of her letters, telling him, "But of course you will win." Oud had recently reviewed *The Fountainhead* (1943) drawing implicit parallels between the plight of the lone architect Howard Roake and his own position.<sup>94</sup> As if he were metamorphosing into Roake himself, Oud argued to de Gruyter that the exhibition might persuade the skeptics to accept his architecture and ended the letter by quoting his own answer to Rand's words of support: "Now we shall see."<sup>95</sup> This retrospective strengthened Oud's position in Holland by showing how his local ideas had once commanded international respect.

The catalog focused mainly on an analysis of Oud's prewar architecture, and on photos and drawings of his architecture from this period. Approximately ten percent of the total photos in the catalog were of the postwar structures—the Shell Building, the proposal for the Hofplein in Rotterdam (1942–1945) and the Esveha Building (1942–1945). This figure corresponded roughly to the representation of these buildings in the exhibition. Oud even went so far as to have reconstructed the model for his Johnson House from the 1932 International Style Exhibition, which was also

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93. De Gruyter told Wubben that he thought that Oud's time was past, but that Oud was still a great architect. Jos de Gruyter to J.C. Ebbinge Wubben, 9 January 1951, Van Boymans File, Gemeentearchive, Rotterdam.

94. J.J.P. Oud, "Het geloof van een architect," *Groene Amsterdammer*, 22 February 1947, 7; Ayn Rand to J.J.P. Oud, 22 September 1947, File 108, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. For further correspondence see J.J.P. Oud to Ayn Rand, 16 July 1947; Ayn Rand to J.J.P. Oud, 4 August 1947, File 107, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.



prominently featured with its plan in the catalog.<sup>96</sup> The large freestanding house looked starkly out of place among his economical social housing of the 1920s. The model was included in the exhibition less as an example of a representation of practical building to the Dutch audience than to show that Oud's work had received international acceptance.

Finally, the contrast between documents in de Gruyter's bibliography and Oud's selection of documents for the vitrines in the exhibition once again suggested the importance that Oud placed on his own international prominence. The catalog contained a rather comprehensive bibliography; it included articles about Oud and articles written by him. Although articles from international publications were included in this list, they did not predominate, as they did in the exhibition.

Oud insisted that Hitchcock's monograph, Oud's Bauhaus book, the *Architectural Record* article on the Shell Building, his own response to that article, and Behrendt's *Modern Building* all be prominently displayed in the vitrines. J.G. Wattjes's *Nieuw-Nederlandse Bouwkunst* (1926) was the only Dutch book that was displayed with these international texts. This choice of documentation emphasized Oud's inclusion in international debates on architecture, as much as the success or failure of his ideas in these debates.<sup>97</sup> Several photos of Oud with leading international architectural figures enhanced the prominent prewar European position that was implied by the selection of texts.<sup>98</sup> Oud constructed his image predominantly in the past; but he saw this exhibition

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95. J.J.P. Oud to Jos de Gruyter, 22 January 1951, File 120, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

96. J.J.P. Oud to Jos de Gruyter, 19 January 1951, File 120, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

97. J.G. Wattjes, *Nieuw-Nederlandse Bouwkunst* (Amsterdam: Kosmos, 1926)

98. Broekhuizen, 281.

as a means of securing his position in the current Dutch debates—and possibly in the larger international ones as well.

Many Dutch newspapers and architectural journals that covered the exhibition offered support for Oud's long productive career. Several reviews focused on Oud's ability to remain an architectural leader. These reviews offered little critical insight and ran under such titles as "J.J.P. Oud, Pioneer of New Building, Exposition in the Boijmans Museum."<sup>99</sup> Newspapers also printed "reviews" by de Gruyter, the author of the catalog, which—not surprisingly—followed the text of the catalog.<sup>100</sup>

Of the several reviews that did analyze the content of the show, two in particular focused on Oud's struggle to define his architecture and remain a postwar leader. H. Schmidt Degener, writing in *Haarlems Dagblad*, examined the evolution of Oud's architecture, arguing that Oud faced many risks in introducing decorative elements into his work, since he was known for his "strong functional elements."<sup>101</sup> Rein Blijstra, writing in *Het Vrije Volk Delft*, remarked that the exhibition might improve Oud's position within the Netherlands: "Presently our real question should be whether Oud is in harmony with his capacities and whether his name as an architect is, at this moment, adequately represented in our country; then the answer "No" must ring out. There is this exhibition to establish his position."<sup>102</sup> Despite the publicity, that he gained from this exhibition, Oud tried to get his work shown in other exhibitions in which he could talk

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99. "J.J.P. Oud, pionier van het nieuwe bouwen, exposeert in museum Boymans," *Algemeen Dagblad*, 24 February 1951.

100. Jos de Gruyter, "Architect J.J.P. Oud, overzichtstentoonstelling in museum Boymans," *Het Vaderland*, 10 March 1951; *De Nieuwe Courant (Den Haag)*, 10 March 1951.

101. H. Schmidt Degener, "Stimulerende tentoonstelling van het werk van J.J.P. Oud," *Haarlems Dagblad*, 3 March 1951.

102. R. Blijstra, "J.J.P. Oud's 'volledige werken' in Museum Boymans," *Het Vrije Volk Delft*, 27 February 1951.

about, or write about his work, in an attempt to bolster his standing in the Dutch architectural movement, and possibly internationally.

A De Stijl exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum shortly followed Oud's retrospective at the Boijmans van Beuningen. In this exhibition, Oud shifted from promoting his own position in the Dutch and international modern movements to highlighting his role within De Stijl. Rather than assessing his position in De Stijl, Oud wanted to establish a clear distinction between his participation in the journal *De Stijl* and the influence that the idea of De Stijl had had on his work. Of course, he emphasized the latter, since this allowed him to maintain an appearance of independence from the perceived constraints of "membership" in De Stijl while still reaping the benefits of association with the name.

Even though Oud's retrospective appeared several months before the De Stijl Exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Oud had begun to help plan this exhibition long before he began to plan his own. As early as 1948, William Sandberg, the museum director at the Stedelijk, had discussed the idea of holding an exhibition on De Stijl.<sup>103</sup> The minutes of the planning meetings show that rather than throwing his immediate support behind this idea, Oud appeared at first to be reluctant to participate. There were probably two reasons for this: first, Oud's general tendency to avoid associating with groups, and second, the fact that De Stijl's utopian vision extended beyond Oud's idea of a provisional modernism.<sup>104</sup> The minutes of the meetings, however, show that Oud became more involved in the planning over time. This was probably because both

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103. W. Sandberg to Museum of Modern Art New York, 15 July 1947, De Stijl Exhibition Archive, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Also see Museum of Modern Art New York to W. Sandberg, 24 July 1947, De Stijl Exhibition Archive, Stedelijk Museum.

104. Oud and van Eesteren both questioned what the "sense" of the exhibition would be, and whether they would have enough free time to contribute to the undertaking. Minutes from De Stijl Exhibition Planning Meeting at the Stedelijk Museum, 19 June 1948, De Stijl Exhibition Folder, Oud Archive.

Gerrit Rietveld (1888–1964), the head organizer, who corresponded frequently with Oud, and Sandberg, thought that architecture could be featured in the exhibition.

The position of architecture in the exhibition, and Oud's involvement with its presentation, are evident from the proposal for the hierarchy of objects in the exhibition. In the minutes of 28 April 1951, Rietveld gave a general overview of the proposed distribution of objects in the rooms. The first room would contain a historical overview of the movement. The second room would feature the work of architects associated with De Stijl—Oud, Cornelis van Eesteren (1897–1988), and Jan Wils (1891–1972). Works on paper and furniture would appear in the third room, and vitrines full of organizational documents and copies of *De Stijl* would appear in the fourth room. The final room would contain the work of other architects and movements who had been influenced by De Stijl in the years following its disintegration.<sup>105</sup> This was consistent with Oud's desire to capture the idea of the movement, rather than simply showing the work of its members. Oud attempted to reinforce the emphasis of the exhibition on the idea of De Stijl with his proposed layout of the exhibition. Oud organized the exhibits in each room chronologically, and he showed the importance of architecture by its placement early in the thematic progression of the rooms.<sup>106</sup>

Oud also placed his stamp on the exhibition catalog. During the early stages of organizing the catalog, Sandberg had requested a copy of the catalog from Oud's exhibition at the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum.<sup>107</sup> Whether he mined this catalog

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105. Minutes from De Stijl Exhibition Planning Meeting, 28 April 1951, De Stijl Exhibition Folder, Oud Archive.

106. Sketch in De Stijl Exhibition Folder, Oud Archive.

107. H.L.C. Jaffe to J.C. Ebbinge Wubben, 22 June 1951, De Stijl Exhibition Archive, Stedelijk Museum. See also Boijmans Museum to Stedelijk Museum, 17 October 1951, De Stijl Exhibition Archive, Stedelijk Museum.

for information on Oud or used it as a template for the De Stijl catalog, the latter roughly resembled the former in that both included an essay, images, and reference to original texts.

The essay in the De Stijl catalog was written by Hans Jaffe. Oud was one of the few organizers who saw Jaffe's essay in advance and critiqued it. He continued his campaign against Corbusier's influence when he noted in this critique: "Whether Le Corbusier had an influence on De Stijl as important as his influence on new objectivity, I do not believe. Inform."<sup>108</sup> This comment reveals Oud's belief that De Stijl was the leader in the revolutionary fusion of art and architecture into an ideal, thus making his role as a participant and as an architect that much more important.

The critical reception of the De Stijl Exhibition was largely positive, though it focused on the efforts of the group, rather than on each individual's role within De Stijl, as Oud would have wished. A review by the visiting English art critic Herbert Read, in the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool*, hints at the general perception of Oud's role in De Stijl.<sup>109</sup> After describing the role played by Mondrian, Rietveld, and Van Doesburg in establishing a connection between forms in art and architecture, Read recalls Oud's opening speech when he remarks that De Stijl still has ideas to offer present day design. Despite this reference, Oud's desire to have the exhibition focus on the idea of De Stijl and on its design concepts did not sway many international critics from their focus on the forms.

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108. "Of le Corbusier invloed heeft gehad op de stijl, weet ik niet, wel was zijn invloed belangrijk voor de nieuwe zakelijkheid. Informeren Inform." (Written by Oud in pencil on a letter to Jaffe, J.J.P. Oud to H.L.C. Jaffe, 20 January 1948, De Stijl Exhibition Folder, Oud Archive.)

109. Herbert Read, "Expositie in Stedelijk Museum toont betekenis van 'De Stijl,'" *Het Parool*, 14 July 1951.

The De Stijl Exhibition coincided with the third congress of the International Association of Art Critics which was held in Amsterdam and The Hague. The theme of the congress was “The birth of abstract art in the Netherlands,” and Oud used his association with De Stijl to gather a group of critics at the Shell Building, to deliver a defense of the design.<sup>110</sup> In his speech, Oud took advantage of the De Stijl Exhibition by reinforcing the argument—which he had made in recent articles—that a relationship existed between the influence of the idea of De Stijl on his work and his desire for artistic expression in the design of the Shell Building—an argument that made a direct connection between the formation of his provisional modernism and De Stijl.

The art critics gathered at the Shell Building on 9 July 1951. Oud began his speech by recounting the controversy surrounding the building, as described in the *Architectural Record*.<sup>111</sup> Following this introduction, Oud negotiated the familiar path between modernism and traditional forms, arguing that thinking like that represented by Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture* and *Mechanization Takes Command* was driving architecture to an “impersonal matter-of-factness.”<sup>112</sup> He followed up this opinion by comparing Wright (“what an artist!”) to Gropius (“a solid and good form, but is that enough?”).<sup>113</sup> This led to a critique of architecture created by teams, and to Oud’s by-now familiar question and answer: “But do you know of one good painting that was painted by three or more painters? I do not.”<sup>114</sup>

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110. J.J.P. Oud, *Speech Delivered by Mr. J.J.P. Oud to Members of the International Association of Art Critics during Their Visit to the Shell Netherlands Building at The Hague on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1951* (The Hague: Shell, 1951).

111. “Mr. Oud Embroiders a Theme,” 80–84.

112. *Ibid.*, 2.

113. *Ibid.*

114. *Ibid.*, 3.

To break away from an architecture of functional and “lifeless modern forms,” Oud argued for a De Stijl-inspired vision that could be applied to buildings, such as his Shell Building, transforming functionalism from an end into the means of a new expressiveness in architecture.<sup>115</sup> In an effort to create these new expressive forms, Oud had added ornament to the Shell Building, but once again he defended its use by referring to Frank Lloyd Wright’s dictum that the ornament is “of the building, not on it.”<sup>116</sup> Despite Oud’s impassioned argument, he remained defensive in his closing remarks:

It [the Shell Building] is not a dead academic figure, as suggested by my American friends, but it grew out of the need for the pleasant rather than only the useful form in which functionalism expresses itself delightfully.

I shall stop here, and shall not try to explain any more. I hope it will be clear to you that there is some wit and some better feeling in the madness of my betrayal. And I am still striving after the old ideals.

You would not be good critics if you did not find a lot to criticize. I think you will find it difficult to discover more than I can find myself.

However: the Shell building is my favourite child. I hope you will like it just a little.<sup>117</sup>

In this speech, Oud acknowledged at one and the same time his “betrayal” of terms of the International Style, his adherence to his consistent design method, and how this method still functioned to create a provisional modernism where “functionalism expresses itself.”

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115. Ibid.

116. Ibid, 4.

117. Ibid.

John Thwaites, an American art critic based in Germany, attended Oud's speech. Shortly afterward, he sent Oud the text of a proposed article. Oud and Thwaites exchanged a series of letters in which Thwaites offered Oud a valuable insight into the difficulty of receiving a positive critical reception in America:

I do not, you see, in the least deny the inevitable reappearance at some point of architectural decoration. But I do not think that architects—not even you—are the right people to do it. If one has spent one's life eliminating decoration, learning to do without it, this is not a good preparation for evolving it. If I may make one criticism of your debating methods, in your speech as well as in your letter, it is this. You never face the specific criticisms of your actual work, but always take refuge in generalizations about what architecture ought to be, or in appeals to the prestige of your past work.<sup>118</sup>

Thwaites captured Oud's predicament of promoting a provisional modernism in a few sentences. Here was a well-known modernist arguing for the introduction of ornamentation who had at one point equated ornamentation with architectural impotency. Calling upon his prewar reputation made it inherently difficult for Oud to argue that his ideas were both inspired by the past and provisional—when they had never been understood as provisional in the prewar period. The problem posed by this dilemma was a problem that Oud would face again when the De Stijl Exhibition traveled to America.

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118. John Anthony Thwaites to J.J.P. Oud, 2 August 1951, File 124, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.



The organizing committee had considered showing the De Stijl Exhibition outside of the Netherlands even before it began to plan the exhibition itself.<sup>119</sup> In 1947, William Sandberg, the director of the Stedelijk Museum, had already suggested to the MoMA that they should work jointly on an exhibition that “should begin with Stijl-movement and finish about 1935.”<sup>120</sup> MoMA agreed to the idea. It assigned Philip Johnson, head of its architecture department, to oversee the exhibition and suggested that Hitchcock might write the accompanying catalog. Johnson set the parameters for the exhibition in a letter to Sandberg:

Both Mr. Barr and I consider that de Stijl was the most important single movement that resulted in what we now call modern architecture and we feel that now is the time to celebrate its achievements with an exhibition and a book. Not since the 17<sup>th</sup> century has your country been of such great international influence in the arts. The exhibition will therefore be good Netherlands propaganda; but because of its international importance we should like to restrict it to the movement and not confuse the message by making it a one-country exhibition. Some other time we shall be very glad to hold a show of modern Netherlands architecture as we have of England and Brazil. Of prime importance however we feel is the story of de Stijl and its influence.<sup>121</sup>

Although in this letter Johnson acknowledged the value of the committee’s initial idea, he also revealed that “individuals on this side of the Atlantic” saw the power and influence of Dutch architecture as being limited in scope. The importance of having the exhibition travel convinced Oud and his fellow committee members to accept the sole

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119. Rietveld hoped that Hitchcock would produce a book on the exhibition while it traveled to New York and through the United States. De Stijl Exhibition Proposal (signed by Rietveld), 1 October 1948, De Stijl Exhibition File, Oud Archive.

focus on the De Stijl movement. But the question of how the exhibition should describe the movement developed into another postwar controversy between Oud and Johnson.

The organizing committee placed Oud—probably the best known internationally of the surviving members of De Stijl—in the worldwide field, in charge of contacting directors of international museums.<sup>122</sup> Oud eventually arranged for the exhibition to travel to the Venice Biennial, and then to the Museum of Modern Art, along with several other tentative American sites. Hoping to get Johnson to accept the exhibition as it was organized in the Netherlands, he struggled to convince Johnson of the value of an exhibition based on the idea of De Stijl, rather than just on works of its members.

A conflict arose between Johnson's desire to arrange the exhibition in his own particular way and Oud's desire to be an advisor to the exhibition, rather than just a source of information. In a letter dated 10 December 1952, Johnson responded to an earlier letter from Oud asking why the museum did not need his model for the Johnson's mother's house: "It is the object of our American exhibition to show the essence of De Stijl in the early 20s rather than what the great artists of the movement did later."<sup>123</sup> Oud replied in a sharp tone that revealed the frustration that had shaped his feelings about his international postwar reception:

I am not quite happy with your letter of Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>. The "Stijl-movement" has not only importance by its latter characteristics but also by the way it was born out of the past.

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120. W. Sandberg to Monroe Wheeler, 15 July 1947, De Stijl Exhibition Archive, Stedelijk Museum.

121. Philip Johnson to W. Sandberg, 7 August 1947, De Stijl Exhibition Archive, Stedelijk Museum.

122. Minutes from De Stijl Exhibition Planning Meeting, 31 May 1951, De Stijl Exhibition Folder, Oud Archive.

123. Philip Johnson to J.J.P. Oud, 10 December 1952, File 133, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

(and for that also: by how it walked into the future. For instance “House Johnson” too).. .

I think it is not right to re-build “De Stijl” into a movement You should like it to be. It was more than alone the trends, which go out of the Rietveld-furniture and the Rietveld space-Building. This was one of the trends but not the only and not that special trend alone you wish it to be.

“De Stijl” had also social and rational trends (read Zevi about it!). For that reason, I must object when you do not show my houses in “Kieffhoek” or Hoek van Holland (like seems to say your letter). . . Ik [sic] should regret if the “Stijl-exhibition” should neglect this side of the movement because one wishes to give it a special meaning. An exhibition like this must be true historical. Especially when you are going to finish it with 1928 (which is also flasch [sic] because just the further results can make the beginning clear.<sup>124</sup>

Johnson brushed off these criticisms by noting that he and Oud could “go on arguing forever”—but this brief exchange represented another lost opportunity for Oud to shape his international reception. Instead, his position in the internationalized American movement was once again transformed into that of a bit player for Johnson’s formal conception of modernism.

The exhibition served as much to solidify the MoMA’s position as an assessor of international stature, and an institution that had established the power of this architecture before the war, as it did to promote scholarship about the De Stijl movement. Barr actually adapted the main text of the De Stijl catalog from the catalog for the Cubism and Abstract Art Exhibition that had been shown in the museum in

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124. J.J.P. Oud to Philip Johnson, 13 December 1952, File 133, Oud J-B, Oud Archive.

1936.<sup>125</sup> Johnson's contemporary preface supported Barr's prewar assertion that "Oud was the greatest but at the same time the most conservative of the Stijl architects" by arguing that the predominant characteristic of De Stijl architecture was its asymmetrical composition—something that Oud had never fully embraced.<sup>126</sup>

Barr's text continued Johnson's reading of Oud's architecture as being not fully committed to their modern ideals, and argued with Johnson that this accounted for his postwar marginalization. In the section of the catalog that covered the careers of De Stijl members, Barr noted that Oud's Hoek van Holland housing of 1924 was a masterpiece of modern architecture, but that it was "free from the mannerisms and complex asymmetry of the orthodox De Stijl manner."<sup>127</sup> Oud's architecture, even in a text written mostly before the war, presented a challenge to easy categorization.

Oud continued to try to bolster his standing in the Netherlands and abroad by overseeing the installation of Wright's traveling exhibition, "Sixty Years of Living Architecture," which he directed to Rotterdam in 1952. (Figure 28) This was yet another of Oud's attempts to draw parallels between himself and Wright—the same influential international architect who had helped him to gain prominence in the prewar period. The catalyst for Oud's support for the exhibition had been a chance meeting with Wright in a Paris hotel after many years of on and off again correspondence.<sup>128</sup>

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125. The title page of the catalog notes, "The text is adapted from *Cubism and Abstract Art*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1936." Alfred Barr, *De Stijl 1917–1928* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961).

126. Barr, *De Stijl 1917–1928*, 5, 10.

127. *Ibid.*, 11.

128. Langmead and Johnson describe this meeting and give an overview of Oud's involvement with the exhibition, though I disagree with their assessment that the Dutch press "ignored" the exhibition. See Donald Langmead and Donald Johnson, *Architectural Excursions, Frank Lloyd Wright, Holland and Europe* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 179–81. Mariette van Stralen offers a more balanced view of the reviews of the exhibition when she notes that it was widely covered in the popular and professional press. See Mariette van Stralen, "Kindred Spirits: Holland, Wright and Wijdeveld," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000),

Ever since he had published his first article on Wright in *De Stijl*, Wright had represented the artist-architect incarnate for Oud. This passionate feeling led Oud to bring to Rotterdam an exhibition that had opened in Philadelphia and had traveled to four other European venues. He personally oversaw the installation of the exhibition, and he wrote an essay for the accompanying catalog that said as much about Oud as it did about Wright.

In this essay, Oud drew a number of parallels, both explicit and implicit, between himself and Wright. He emphasized the creative ability of the individual architect, which he had discussed before in several postwar articles. He opened his essay by comparing the Dutch progression of Cuypers to Berlage to himself to the American progression of Richardson to Sullivan to Wright. Oud had used this idea of a modern historical lineage quite successfully in “Modern Dutch Architecture: Its Past, Present and Future,” and Hitchcock had made use of the same idea in *Modern Architecture*. But both of these writings came from the prewar period, and Oud’s references to progression gave the essay a passé tone. The emphasis on modern historical lineage had given way in most postwar writings, to an emphasis on the integration of group-generated designs into the larger urban fabric.

Oud also drew several implicit parallels between himself and Wright. First, Oud noted that Wright had been internationally famous in the early years of his practice—much as Oud had been famous internationally while working in the Netherlands. Next, Oud continued his attack on CIAM-inspired group design, noting that Wright despised architecture that was either “box-like” or a “box-on-piles.” Although

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64. For letters that refer to Oud and Wright’s meeting, see J.J.P. Oud to Frank Lloyd Wright, 3 July 1952, File 131, Oud J-B, Oud Archive. Also see J.J.P. Oud to Bruno Zevi, 9 May 1952, File 130, Oud J-B, Oud

the focus of Oud's essay was largely historical, he noted in his conclusion that the current deplorable state of architecture, and the possible solution that Wright offered:

Our time puts particular emphasis on architecture of social justice, and unfortunately also, often on a spirit of rather tepid emotions and withered reasonableness. The latter: not only because of cost restraints! And even for these average works we have to thank Wright for the great impulse. But above all we must be grateful for the wonderful example of a genius architect, who in the middle of a time of patent objectivism again and again makes known how to delight through an idealism that knows no borders.<sup>129</sup>

Oud used Wright to continue his campaign for an architecture driven by artistic concerns—an architecture that would express an idealism beyond much of the industrial design that he witnessed in current architecture. Progressive modernism functioned precisely in this manner, with the practical application of an idea modulating its theoretical basis.

Oud achieved his goal of a close associating of himself with Wright in the eyes of the Dutch reviewers, though the exhibition was not covered internationally. Time and time again, the Dutch reviews mentioned Oud as the organizer, and many of them cited Oud's opinion that Wright was the greatest architect of his time.<sup>130</sup> Other reviews

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Archive.

129. "Onze tijd legt in het bijzonder het accent op een bouwkunst van sociale rechtvaardigheid, met, helaas, dikwijls annex een geest van nogal lauwe bewogenheid en wat dorre redelijkheid. Dit laatste: niet alleen uit geldgebrek! En zelfs voor deze doorsnee-werken donken we aan Wright grote impulsen. Maar bovenal moeten we Wright erkentelijk zijn voor dat prachtige voorbeeld van een geniaal bouwmeester, di te midden van een tijd van aperte zakelijkheid steeds weer weet te verrukken door een idealisme, dat geen grenzen kent." J.J.P. Oud, "flw," in *Frank Lloyd Wright* (Rotterdam: Ahoy'-gebouw, 1952), 4.

130. For examples of reviews, see Jerome Mellquist, "Frank Lloyd Wright: een rebel in de Amerikaanse architectuur," *Het Vaderland*, 12 July 1952; W. Jos de Gruyter, "Boeiende expositie van werk van F.L. Wright," *Het Vaderland*, 12 July 1952; "Betovering in een bezeten Wereld," *Het Parool*, 12 July 1952; "Frank Lloyd Wright: Vader der organische Bouwkunst," *de Telegraaf*, 15 July 1952; "Frank Lloyd Wright, Amerikaans bouwmeester," *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 12 July 1952; "Frank Lloyd Wright,"

quoted extensively from Oud's opening remarks at the exhibition, often noting that Oud equated Wright's ability to create designs with the individual democracy that flourished in America.

Unfortunately, none of the reviewers attempted to assess this implied connection. Instead, they offered only kudos for Oud's ability to bring the traveling exhibition to Holland. In addition, while most reviewers praised the utopian ideals and design savvy in Wright's work, they also implied that utopian ideals and design savvy did not provide enough grounding for most architects.<sup>131</sup>

Just six years after the liberation of the Netherlands, Oud stopped trying to strengthen his position at home, realizing that praise and status in the Netherlands no longer translated into fame abroad. His attempts to promote his architecture by grounding it historically—rather than by highlighting its significance to current design—served only to focus attention on his diminished role in postwar international debates, and to illuminate the unexpected path that his provisional modernism had forged.

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*Bouwbelagen* 17, no. 28 (1952): 4–5; R. Blijstra, "Frank Lloyd Wright, bezeten pionier," *Vrij Nederland*, 19 July 1952.

131. J.J.P. Oud, "Frank Lloyd Wright," File F.A.D. 22, Oud Archive. Probably text delivered by Oud at the opening of the Wright exhibition. He mentions that "dogmatic architectural elements" see potential risks in Wright's practice of architecture. Oud implies that these people probably do not find Wright dogmatic enough, but he asks, "But what great artist is?" Again, Oud is defending himself as much as Wright.

## Conclusion

We architects have to be full to the brim of idealism. Rigorous against our enemies; rigorous against our friends. If we wish to save architecture from the leveling trends of the moment, from the killing influence of a functionalism that has elevated itself from a means to an end, we shall have to exert ourselves for it much more than we do now. An architect without architectural ideals is not an architect: he is a builder. The most important thing we want at present is architecture. We shall need all our energy for it!<sup>1</sup>

In his defense of the Shell Building to a group of international art critics, Oud demonstrated the paradoxical nature of his provisional modernism—an approach that has made it difficult for critics and historians to understand his legacy. My analysis focuses on the events connecting the formation and promotion of Oud's work to its reception, and on how these connections influenced the critics' expectations for his subsequent work. My study suggests four possible subjects for future research in architectural history: the idea of provisional modernism as a valid form of modernism, the importance of culturally based analysis, the value of comparative models, and the formation of expectations and their importance to an architect's development.

Like the visions of many modernists, Oud's vision of a responsive architecture was based in a theoretical ideal that relied on technical innovation and new materials in construction. But his modernism was distinct in that it focused on the process rather than the final forms, creating an artistic expression by assessing the conditions presented by each project in relation to his design ideals. Oud was aware of the

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1. J.J.P. Oud, *Speech Delivered by Mr. J.J.P. Oud to Members of the International Association of Art Critics during Their Visit to the Shell Netherlands Building at The Hague on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1951*, 4.



challenges posed by his approach; in his defense of the Shell Building, quoted above, he exhorts us not to allow modern ideals (friends) to become formulaic—that is, not adaptable to context—and not to regress into copying traditional forms (enemies).

Oud's provisional modernism highlights the importance of understanding an architect's body of writings, as distinct from his or her actual built forms. Historians too often start with the built form and borrow from writings to support design choices, rather than examining the writings themselves and determining their true function within an architect's career. In the case of Oud, he defined his provisional modernism in his writing by describing appropriate design choices, by creating a specific historical context for his designs, and by extolling responsive architects, like Wright, and rejecting those promoting formulas, like Le Corbusier. Thus, my study calls for further research into modernist writings, and into their effect on the design of future projects. Especially in a period defined by its publications as much as by its architecture, an ongoing investigation of the reception of modernist publications will increase our understanding of the eventual path of modern architecture.<sup>2</sup>

Oud's provisional modernist approach is actually less paradoxical when seen within the context of Dutch culture. By embracing a compromise between his theory and its practical application, Oud follows a long tradition of Dutch architecture, which has often sought expression within strict parameters. Addressing the very real national parameters that faced the modernists who physically moved, or whose ideas moved, beyond their national borders, is crucial to understanding the creations of these

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2. For an eloquent discussion of the role of modernist publicity, see Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*.

modernists.<sup>3</sup> Given the importance of national differences, it is not difficult to see why Hitchcock and Johnson's attempt to distill an International Style has long since been abandoned. In view of Oud's Dutch sensibility, it is important to begin, as I have done in this study, by examining projects situated in the Netherlands—a context that Oud's work rarely leaves, despite his short-lived international fame. I advocate for a culturally based understanding of strains of modernism that often seems lacking in current examinations of modern architecture.

Several recent studies have investigated international figures in their national context, greatly enriching our understanding of international ideas, and of the importance of these figures.<sup>4</sup> Nancy Stieber's *Housing Design and Society in Amsterdam* provides a detailed analysis of the forces that shaped the design of Amsterdam from 1900 to 1920—forces in which Berlage played a controlling role. She argues that Berlage's designs responded as much to Dutch conditions as they did to more general modern needs. *Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier* focuses specifically on Charles-Edouard Jeanneret's career as a French architect before he changed his name to Le Corbusier. The editors describe how Le Corbusier's early work in France influenced his later internationally renowned designs. It is even more appropriate to investigate Oud from a national perspective, since he worked for eighteen years as a city architect, and built only once outside of the Netherlands. It was lectures,

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3. For a good concise analysis on nationality and modernism, see Anthony D. Smith, "Nationalism and Modernity," in *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy Benson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 68–80.

4. Stieber, *Housing Design and Society in Amsterdam: Reconfiguring Urban Order and Identity, 1900–1920*; and Stanislaus von Moos and Arthur Rüegg, eds., *Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier: Applied Arts, Architecture, Painting, Photography, 1907–1922*.

publications, and exhibitions that determined each modern movement's perception of his architecture.

Another way of investigating Oud's national roots would be by comparing his work to that of other Dutch modernists, such as Mart Stam (1899–1986), who also joined modernist groups and was famous outside the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup> Several questions might be posed in this comparison. Why do similar movements meet with different receptions? Which processes of dissemination does each movement emphasize, and how does this affect the reception by each movement? Are there any characteristics of modernism that are uniquely Dutch? By comparing individual architects, and by looking at their contacts with other national movements, we can begin to answer these questions.

The comparative model that I suggest for Oud and Stam can also be used to study other modernist figures. Architecture is a competitive profession, but this fact is often ignored in the traditional biographical or monographic studies of architects.<sup>6</sup> These studies usually describe their subjects as functioning in a self-determined vacuum, with little reference to the work of their fellow architects—or to the critics' reception of their own work. For example, to understand the role that Oud played in the International Style Exhibition, it is essential to understand the roles that Hitchcock and

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5. Mart Stam was particularly interested in new social and ethical approaches in architecture. As a young man he lived for a short time in Switzerland, and in 1924 he founded *ABC Beiträge zum Bauen* with Hans Schmidt and Emil Roth. He gained his greatest fame in the late twenties with his inexpensive, high-quality housing projects. These projects included his terraced houses at the Weissenhof Siedlung and his Hellerhof Settlement (1928–1929) in Frankfurt. For more information, see Sima Ingberman, *ABC: International Constructivist Architecture, 1922–1939* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); Werner Möller, *Mart Stam, 1899–1986: Architekt, Visionär, Gestalter: sein Weg zum Erfolg, 1919–1930* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1997); *Mart Stam: Documentation of his Work, 1920–1965*, eds. R. Blijstra et al. (London: RIBA Publications, 1970).

6. Helene Lipstadt addressed this issue by applying the methodology of Pierre Bourdieu. Helene Lipstadt, "Theorizing the Competition: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu as a Challenge to Architectural History," *Thresholds* 21 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Department of Architecture, 2000): 32–36.

Johnson assigned to Mies, Le Corbusier, and Gropius in the exhibition. Mies emerges from this competitive matrix in postwar period to replace the formerly anointed Oud as the refiner of the characteristics of the International Style. Mies' rise in popularity in America was one of the factors that contributed to the marginalization of Oud's postwar international standing. A comparative model of analysis creates a dynamic history where the relationships between individuals, and between individuals and groups or institutions, are considered. The difficulty with pursuing this method is the constant need to define the subject's position with regard to others, and the need to develop an in-depth understanding of the individuals, groups, and institutions at each point of interaction.

Contrary to the formalists' arguments, focusing on the interactions among architects, institutions, critics, and historians does not lessen the importance of an architect's production. Rather it reveals how these factors influence this production. Oud's opportunities were bounded by the expectations of those in his world. Oud's architecture did not change radically in the prewar period, yet it was understood in two very different ways in Germany and America. The interpretation of Oud's prewar period architecture was claimed by individuals promoting a formal analysis—predominantly by Barr, Hitchcock, and Johnson.

It followed that in the postwar period, when the American movement was internationalized and the definition of modernism broadened to include numerous variations, the interpretation of Oud's postwar work was limited by the stylistic expectations that had shaped his earlier reception. Consequently, Oud's provisional modernism never had a chance to assert itself in postwar America, because Oud's

efforts to defend the stylistic elements of his Shell Building overwhelmed his ability to explain his design process. Hans Jauss describes how previous readings of previous texts influence future readings: “The coherence of literature as an event is primarily mediated in the horizon of expectations of the literary experience of contemporary and later readers, critics, and authors.”<sup>7</sup> In the case of architecture, by comprehending and representing the effects of these expectations, we begin to see how earlier reception can shape an architect’s future production. Thus, focusing on the concept of expectation encourages a perspective that looks backwards as much as it looks forward from a point in time to develop an understanding of the forces that helped to determine the design of a building.

The original goal of my study was simple—to address the international rise and fall of Oud’s prominence by focusing directly on the central issue of his reception. Choosing this method required intensive research, not only on Oud and his work, but also on the figures and institutions surrounding him. It has been a challenge to choose limits for the research beyond Oud himself without compromising the richness of supporting and contradicting viewpoints. The choice of a dynamic method presents these practical challenges, but it also captures the dynamic nature of modernism, allows us to redefine national movements, emphasizes the benefits of comparative models, and finally, offers insights into how reception, and the expectations that result from reception, define the legacy of an architect.

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7. Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, 22.

## **Appendix A**

### Oud Lectures in Germany

"The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present and Future,"  
27 March 1923, Magdeburg, Town Hall

"The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present and Future,"  
21 March 1923, Berlin Society of German Arts and Crafts

"The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present, and Future,"  
17 August 1923, Weimar, Bauhaus Week

"The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present, and Future,"  
30 October 1925, Stuttgart, Werkbund

"The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present, and Future,"  
3 June 1926, Hamburg, for the Bunde Deutscher Architekten Architektur-  
Ausstellung

"The Development of Modern Architecture in Holland: Past, Present, and Future,"  
21 January 1927, Hannover, Group for Contemporary Art

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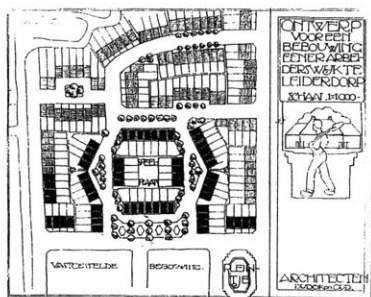
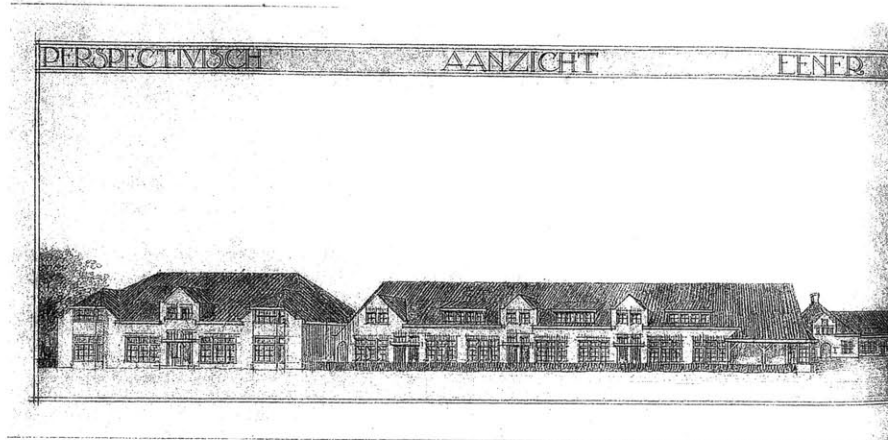


Figure 1

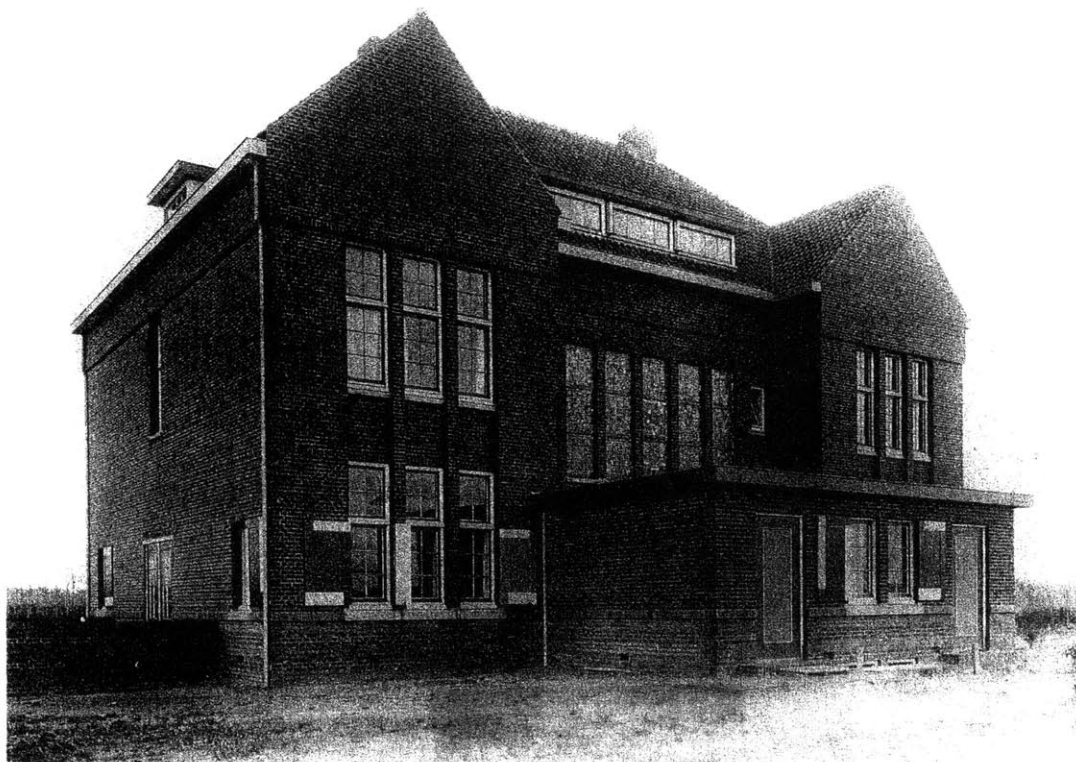


Figure 2



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

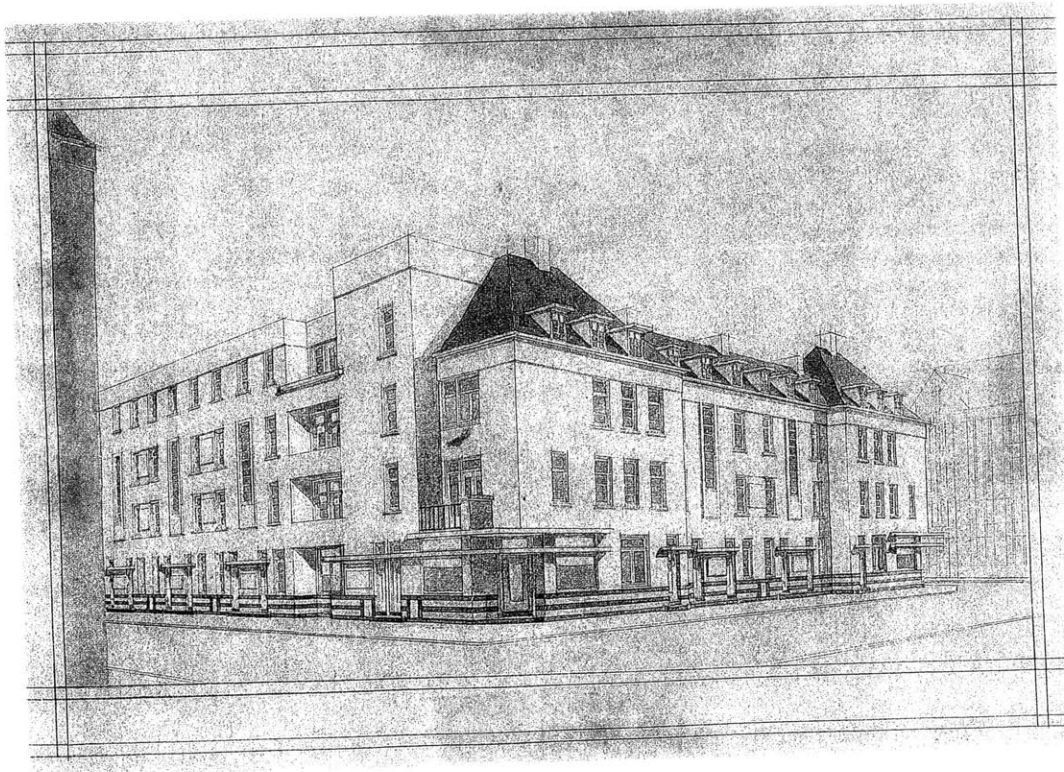


Figure 5



Figure 6



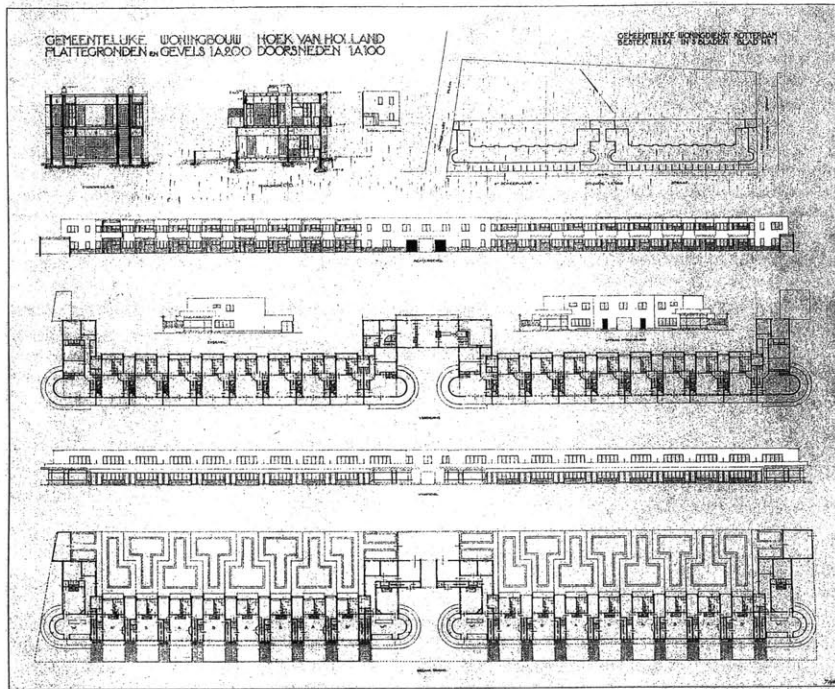


Figure 7

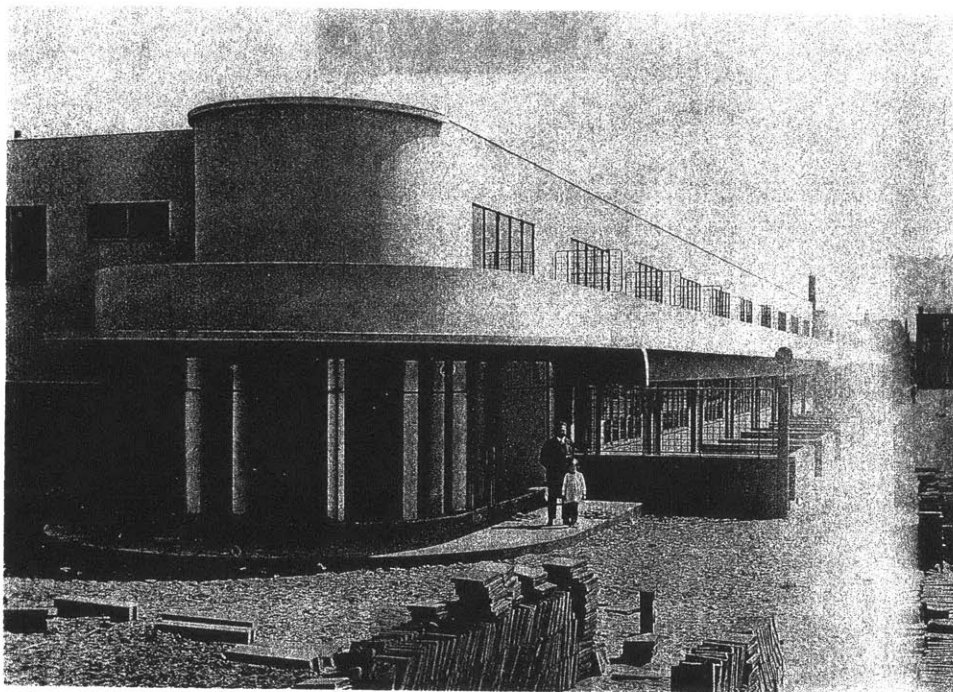


Figure 8



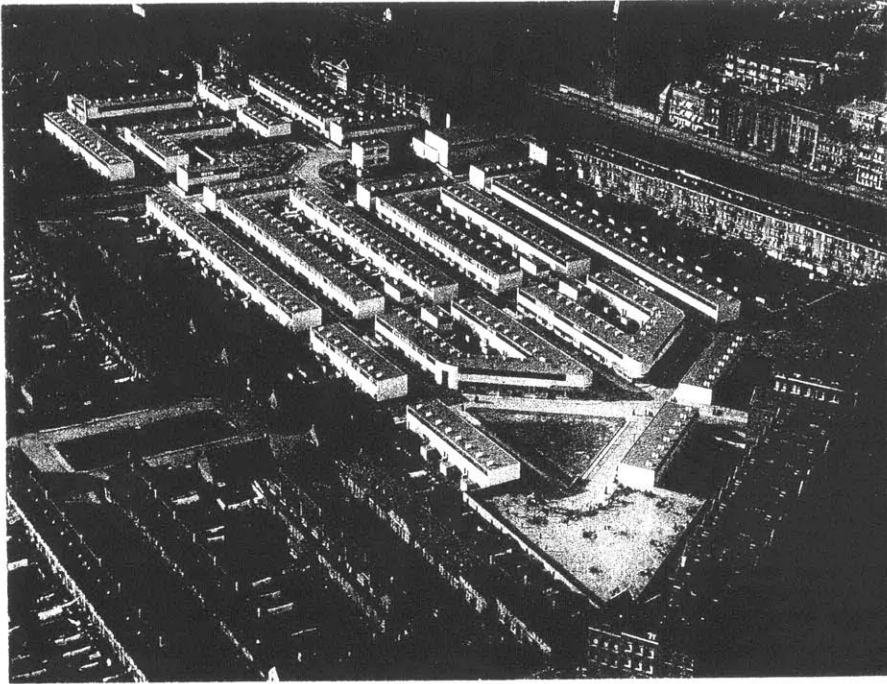


Figure 9

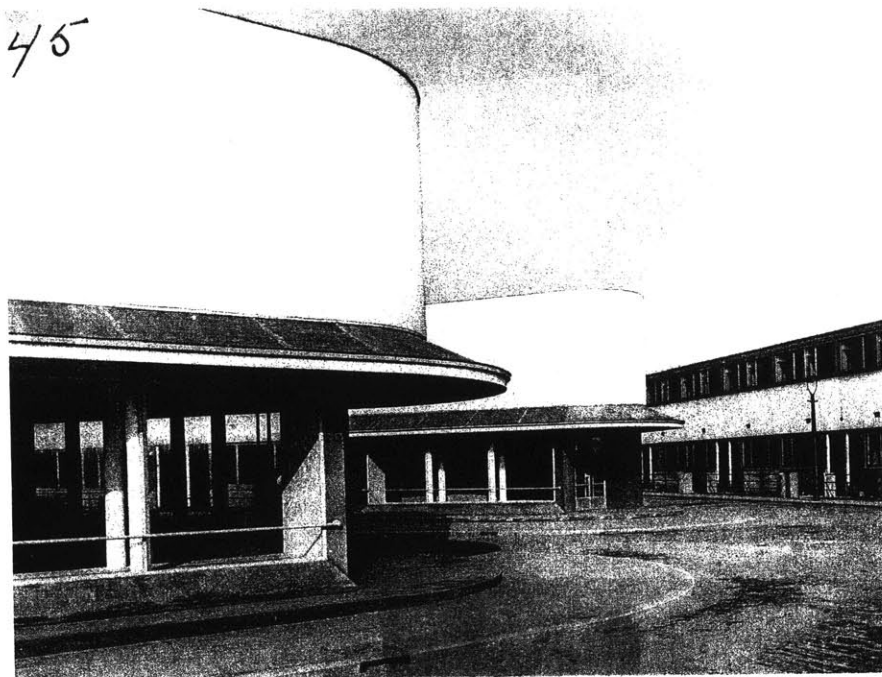
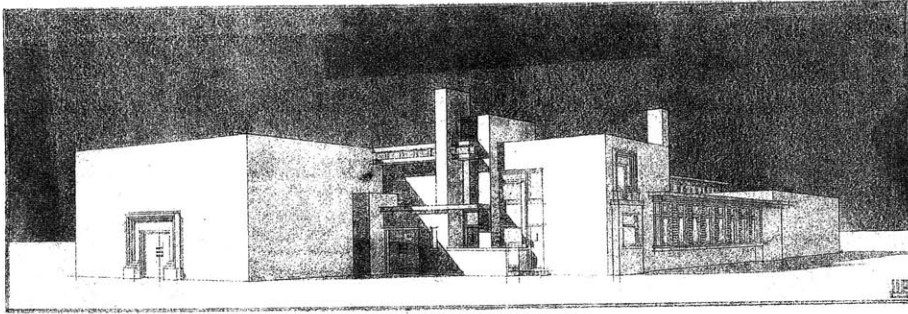
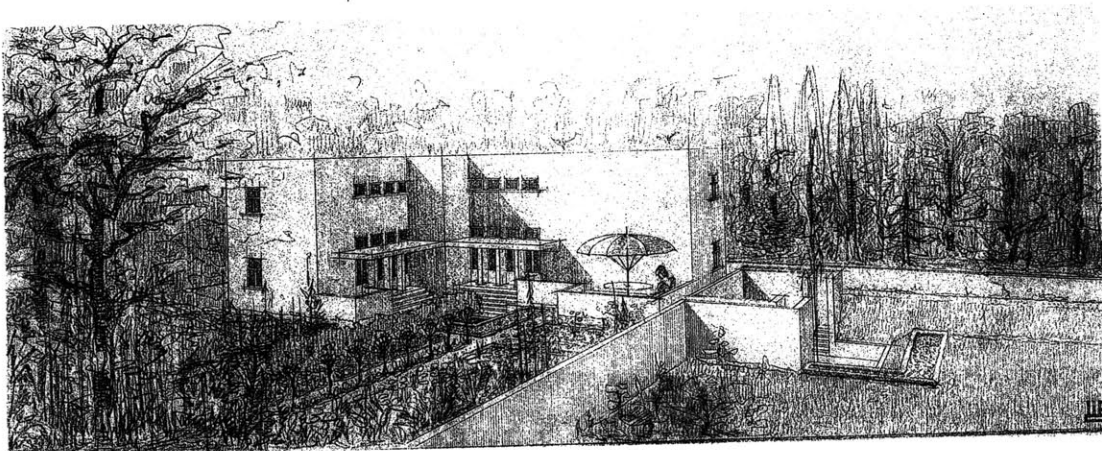


Figure 10



**Figure 11**



**Figure 12**

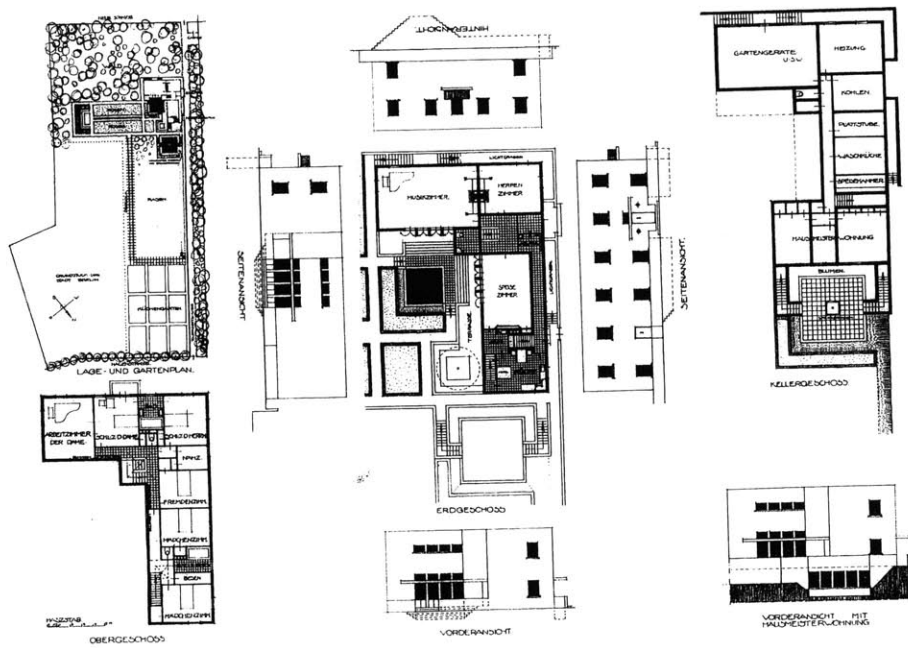


Figure 13

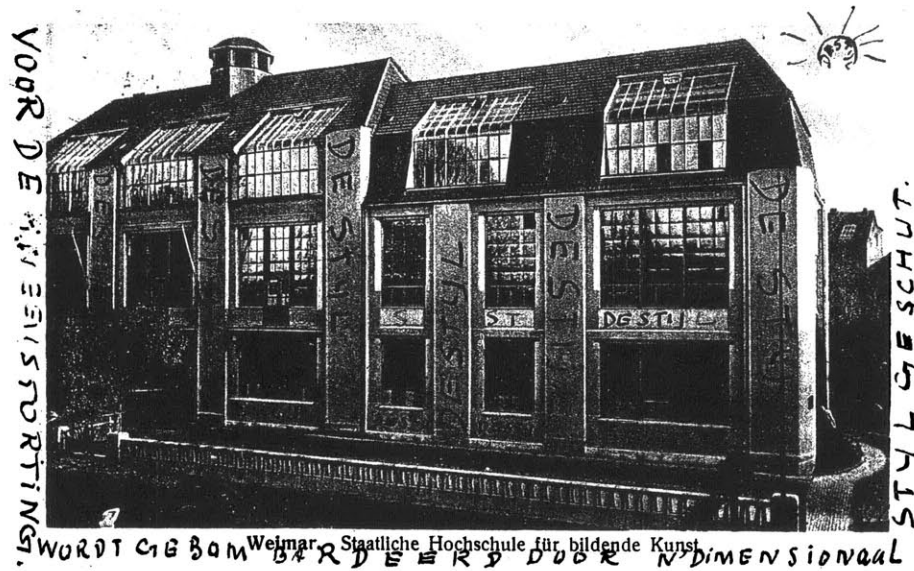


Figure 14

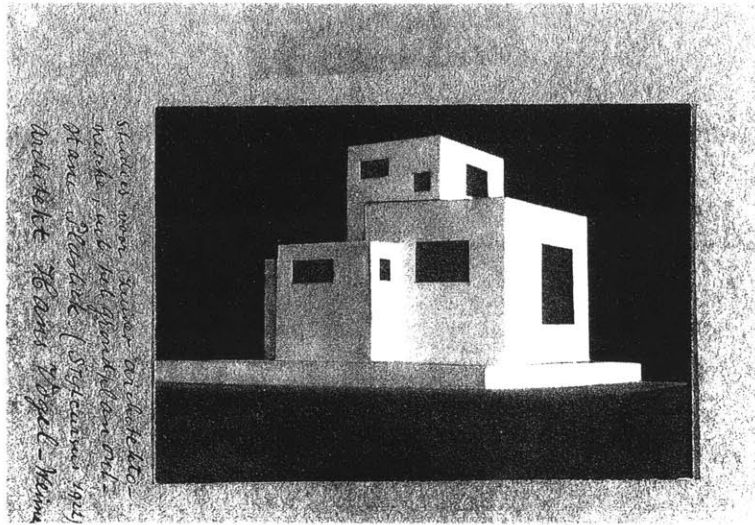


Figure 15

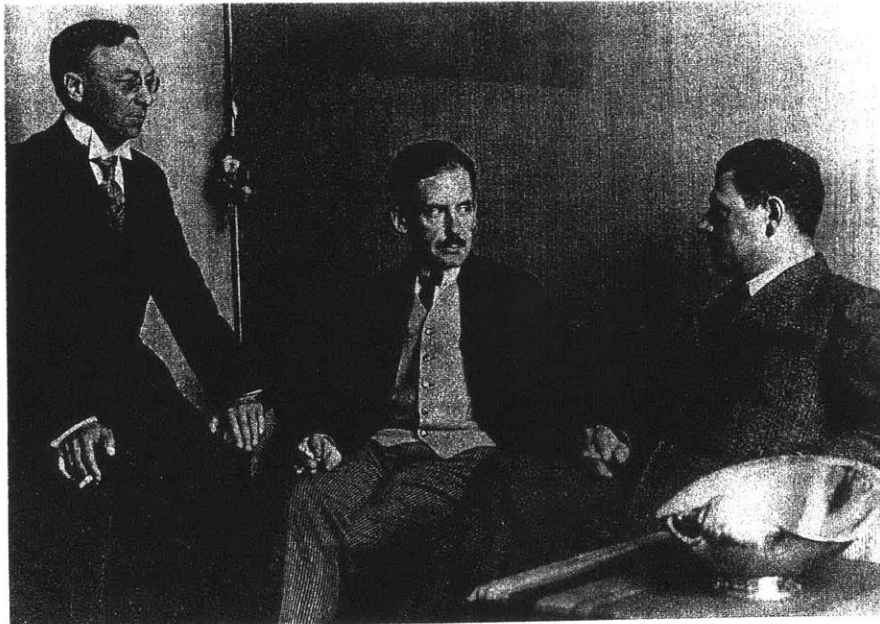


Figure 16

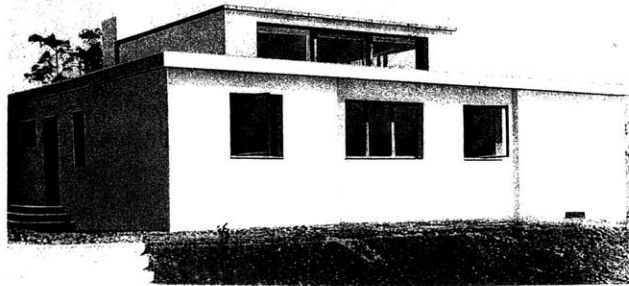
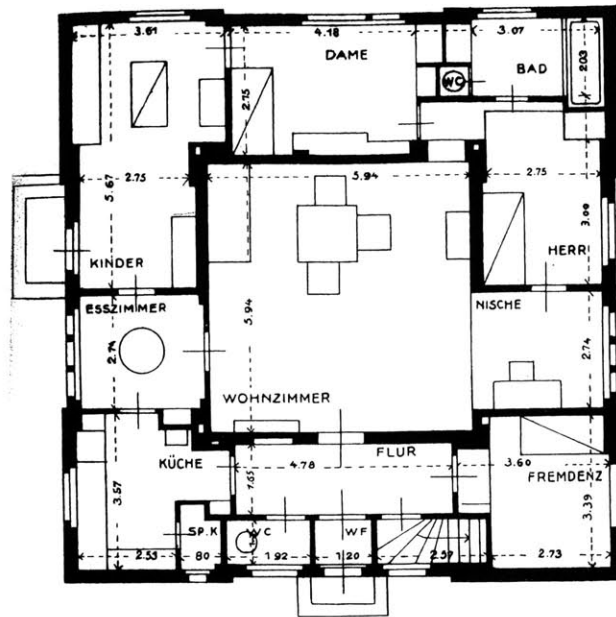


Figure 17

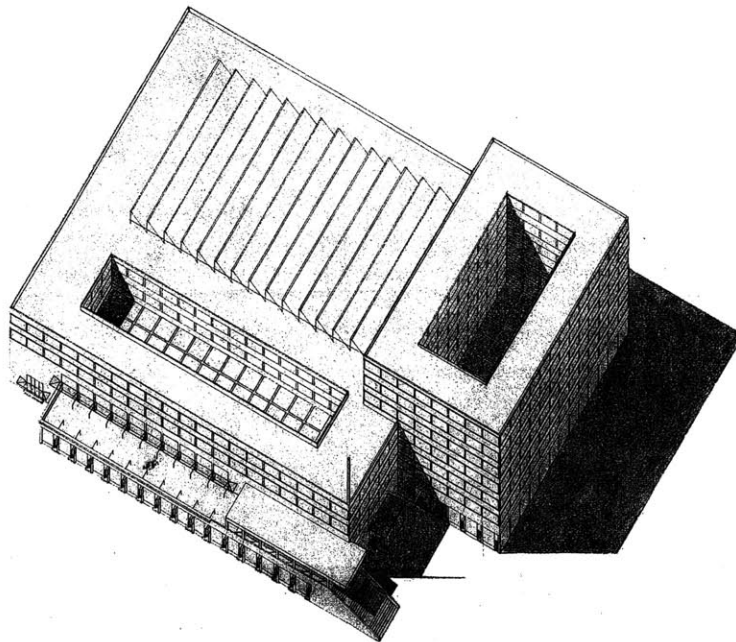
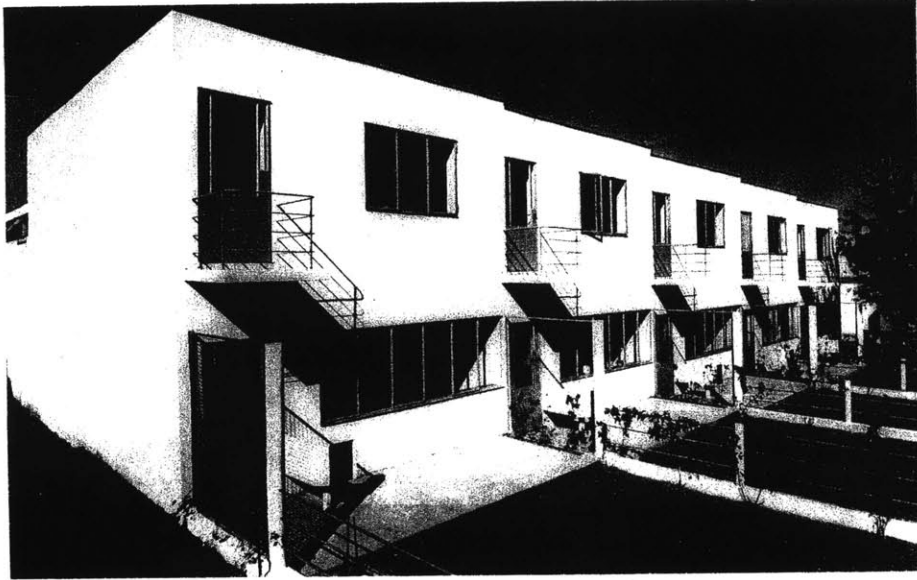
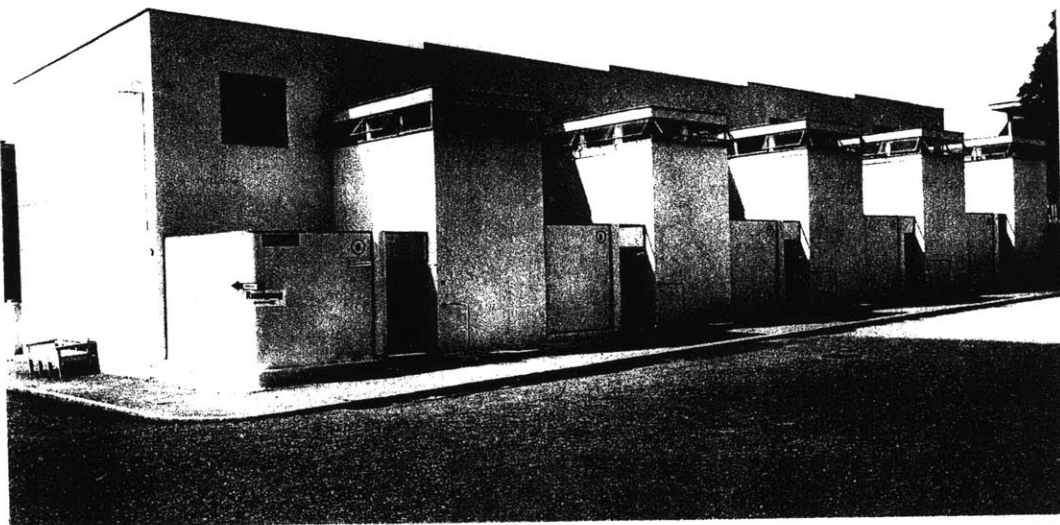


Figure 18



**Figure 19**



**Figure 20**

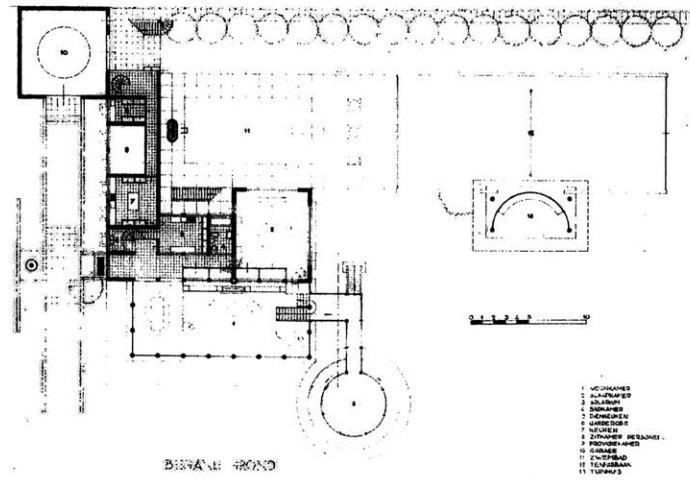


Figure 21

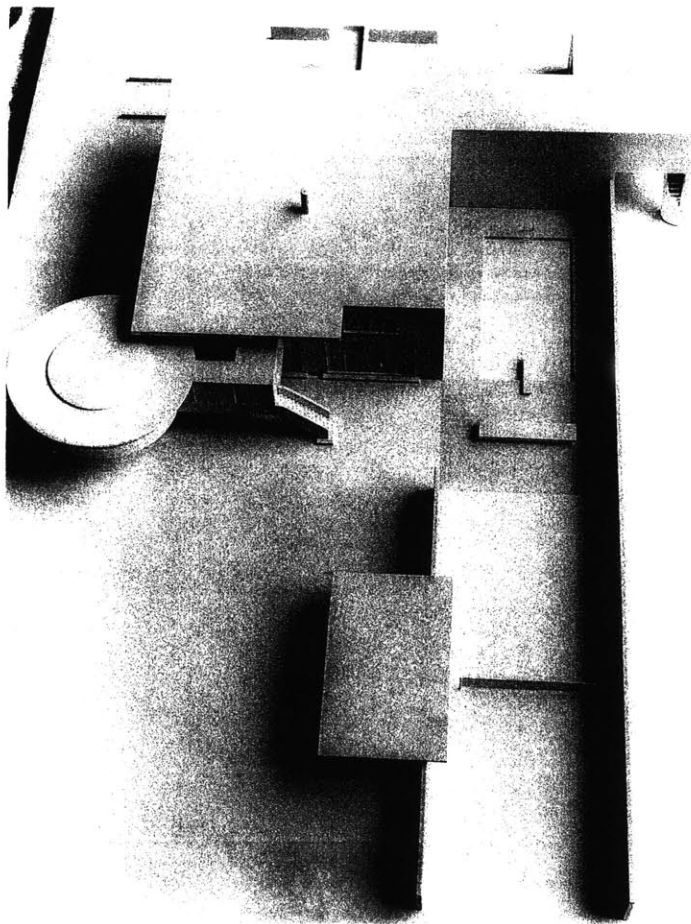
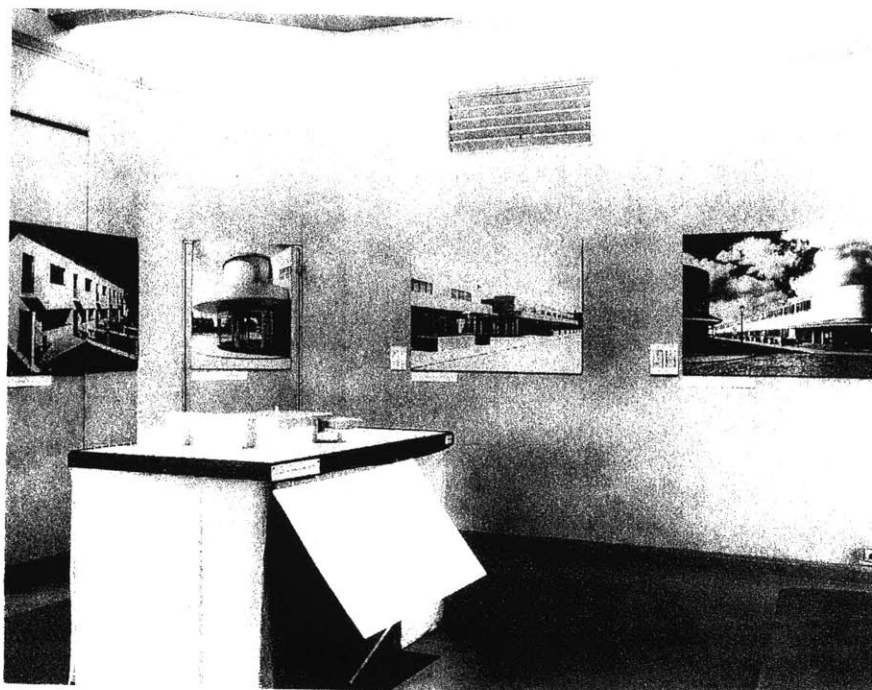


Figure 22





**Figure 23**



**Figure 24**



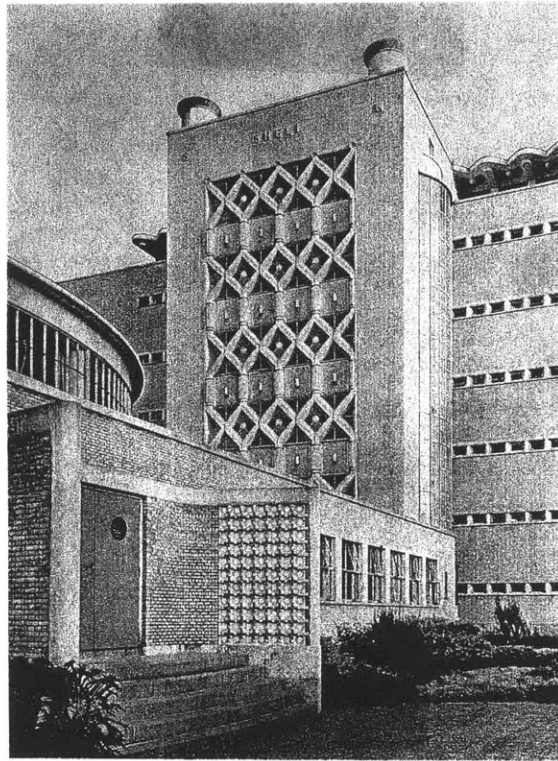


Figure 25

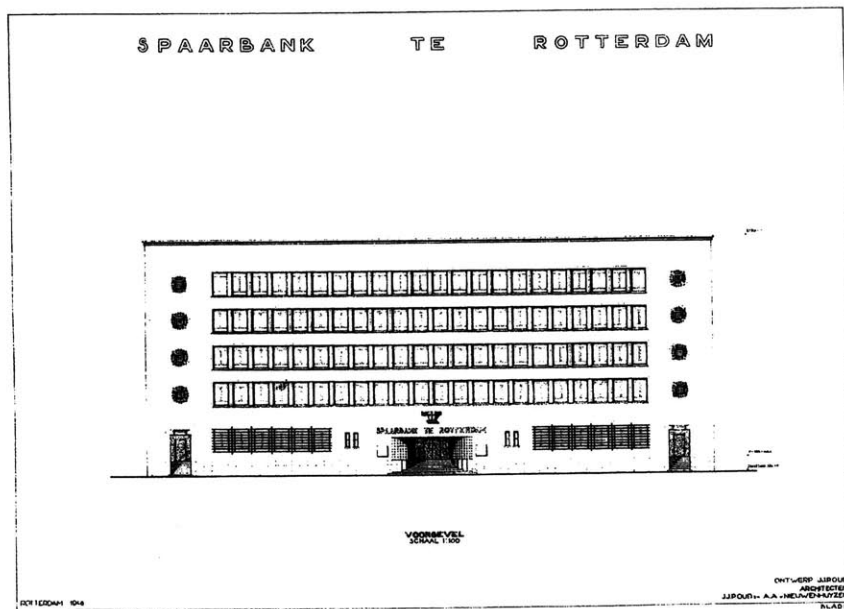


Figure 26

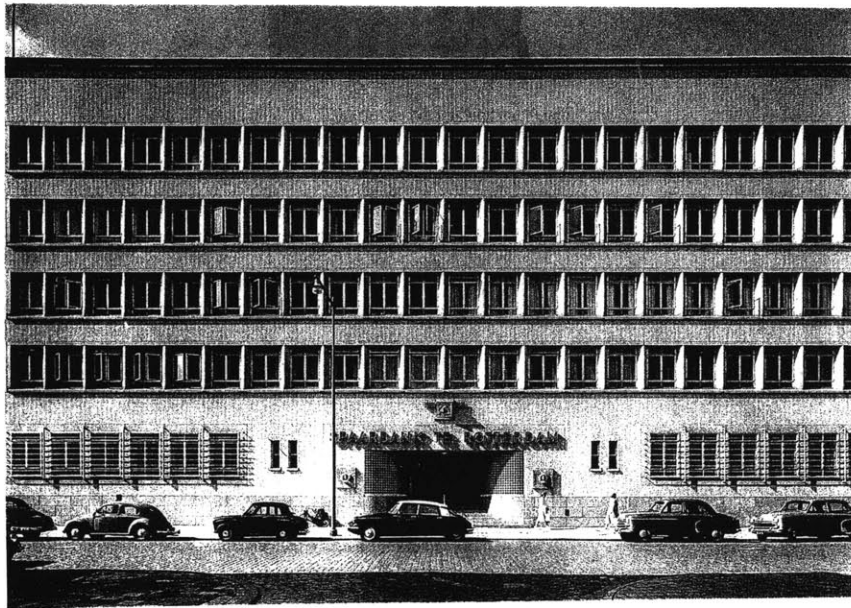


Figure 27

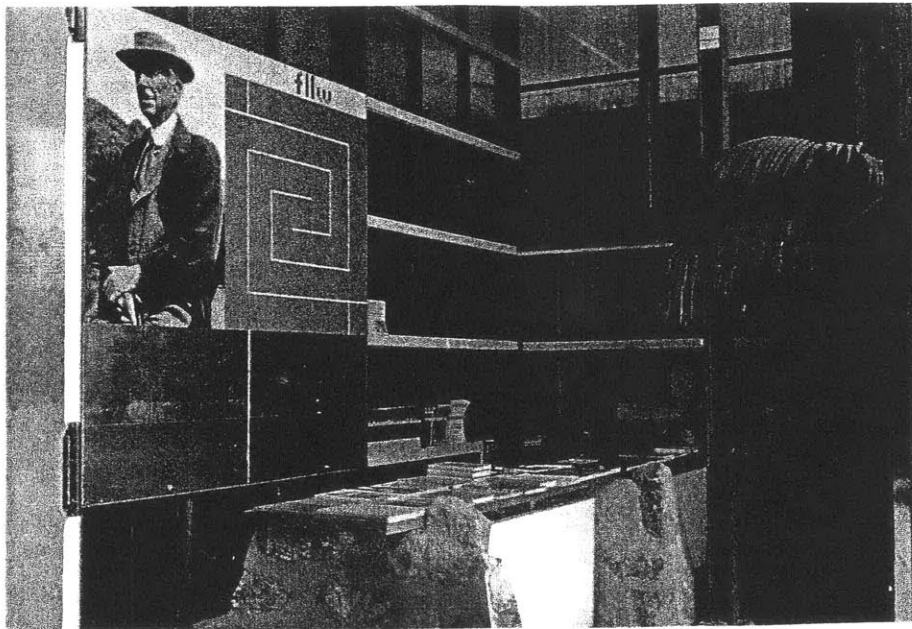


Figure 28